Acerca de este libro

Esta es una copia digital de un libro que, durante generaciones, se ha conservado en las estanterías de una biblioteca, hasta que Google ha decidido escanearlo como parte de un proyecto que pretende que sea posible descubrir en línea libros de todo el mundo.

Ha sobrevivido tantos años como para que los derechos de autor hayan expirado y el libro pase a ser de dominio público. El que un libro sea de dominio público significa que nunca ha estado protegido por derechos de autor, o bien que el período legal de estos derechos ya ha expirado. Es posible que una misma obra sea de dominio público en unos países y, sin embargo, no lo sea en otros. Los libros de dominio público son nuestras puertas hacia el pasado, suponen un patrimonio histórico, cultural y de conocimientos que, a menudo, resulta difícil de descubrir.

Todas las anotaciones, marcas y otras señales en los márgenes que estén presentes en el volumen original aparecerán también en este archivo como testimonio del largo viaje que el libro ha recorrido desde el editor hasta la biblioteca y, finalmente, hasta usted.

Normas de uso

Google se enorgullece de poder colaborar con distintas bibliotecas para digitalizar los materiales de dominio público a fin de hacerlos accesibles a todo el mundo. Los libros de dominio público son patrimonio de todos, nosotros somos sus humildes guardianes. No obstante, se trata de un trabajo caro. Por este motivo, y para poder ofrecer este recurso, hemos tomado medidas para evitar que se produzca un abuso por parte de terceros con fines comerciales, y hemos incluido restricciones técnicas sobre las solicitudes automatizadas.

Asimismo, le pedimos que:

+ *Haga un uso exclusivamente no comercial de estos archivos* Hemos diseñado la Búsqueda de libros de Google para el uso de particulares; como tal, le pedimos que utilice estos archivos con fines personales, y no comerciales.

+ *No envíe solicitudes automatizadas* Por favor, no envíe solicitudes automatizadas de ningún tipo al sistema de Google. Si está llevando a cabo una investigación sobre traducción automática, reconocimiento óptico de caracteres u otros campos para los que resulte útil disfrutar de acceso a una gran cantidad de texto, por favor, envíenos un mensaje. Fomentamos el uso de materiales de dominio público con estos propósitos y seguro que podremos ayudarle.

+ *Conserve la atribución* La filigrana de Google que verá en todos los archivos es fundamental para informar a los usuarios sobre este proyecto y ayudarles a encontrar materiales adicionales en la Búsqueda de libros de Google. Por favor, no la elimine.

+ *Manténgase siempre dentro de la legalidad* Sea cual sea el uso que haga de estos materiales, recuerde que es responsable de asegurarse de que todo lo que hace es legal. No dé por sentado que, por el hecho de que una obra se considere de dominio público para los usuarios de los Estados Unidos, lo será también para los usuarios de otros países. La legislación sobre derechos de autor varía de un país a otro, y no podemos facilitar información sobre si está permitido un uso específico de algún libro. Por favor, no suponga que la aparición de un libro en nuestro programa significa que se puede utilizar de igual manera en todo el mundo. La responsabilidad ante la infracción de los derechos de autor puede ser muy grave.

Acerca de la Búsqueda de libros de Google

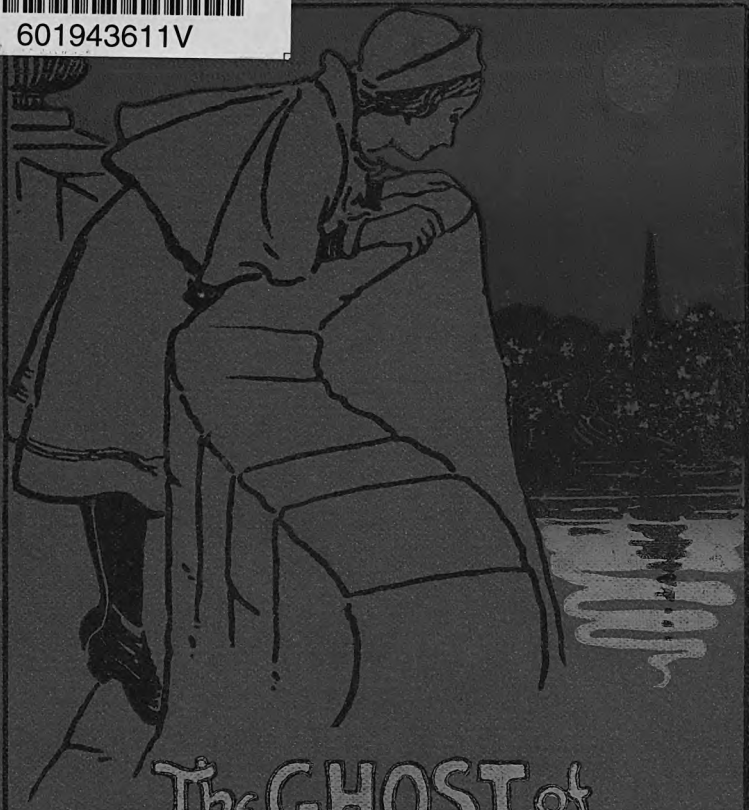
El objetivo de Google consiste en organizar información procedente de todo el mundo y hacerla accesible y útil de forma universal. El programa de Búsqueda de libros de Google ayuda a los lectores a descubrir los libros de todo el mundo a la vez que ayuda a autores y editores a llegar a nuevas audiencias. Podrá realizar búsquedas en el texto completo de este libro en la web, en la página `http://books.google.com`

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

https://books.google.com

601943611V



The GHOST of ROCK GRANGE

BESSIE · MARCHANT

S.P.C.K.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

1489.e.165

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

A SHADOW GLIDED OUT FROM THE OTHER SHADOWS BELOW, AND SEEMED TO WAVE ITS HAND TO HER. [*Page 76.*

Digitized by Google

THE

GHOST OF ROCK GRANGE.

BY

BESSIE MARCHANT

(MRS. J. A. COMFORT),

AUTHOR OF

"THE GIRL CAPTIVES;" "THE BONDED THREE," ETC. ETC.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE GENERAL LITERATURE COMMITTEE.

LONDON:
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, W.C.;
43, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, E.C.
BRIGHTON: 129, NORTH STREET.
NEW YORK: E. & J. B. YOUNG AND CO.

Digitized by Google

PRINTED BY
WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Ellen Samuel's Story	7
II.	The Poaching Fray	17
III.	Molly sees the Ghost	27
IV.	Molly's New Pet	38
V.	Secret Ministrations	47
VI.	Biles proves Obstinate	57
VII.	The Ghost again	66
VIII.	The Schoolroom-Maid's Hysterics ...	77
IX.	Divers Shocks and Surprises	87
X.	In Sight of the End	97
XI.	Molly's Confession	107
XII.	The Wisdom of the Spider	118

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE GHOST OF ROCK GRANGE.

CHAPTER I.

ELLEN SAMUEL'S STORY.

IT must be a sly, secretive sort of spook evidently, for until the coming of Ellen Samuel to be their schoolroom maid, the children had never heard of it, although they had lived at Rock Grange all their lives, saving for occasional holidays at the seaside, and the memorable three months spent in London last year, when Parliament was sitting.

Ellen had not been induced to part with her information all at once, and several times they had caught her giving different versions of the story, and had been compelled to correct the details from their own remembrance of what she had told them on previous occasions. This was doubtless owing to the very bad memory with which she was

Digitized by Google

afflicted, and which even prevented her remembering the common everyday duties of her life, thus bringing her many a lecture from Mrs. Wills, the housekeeper, who had been nurse when the children were younger.

This defect, however, put aside, Ellen was really impressive as a story-teller, dropping her voice to a mysterious whisper at the tragic parts, and making them shiver with fear, even in broad daylight when the sun was shining. But Hubert and Molly looked on this quaking sensation as a true test of a good story, and would have considered any narration of the kind that had given them no thrills as considerably wanting in power.

Rock Grange was built on high ground, above the quarries whence was dug the famous Stoneden slate, and the garden sloped in terraces right down to the old quarry, disused now, but which had been one of the great sources of wealth to the children's grandfather, the De Grey who had built Rock Grange on the site of the old timber house which had formerly crowned the hill.

The ghost was a younger brother of their grandfather, according to the story told by Ellen Samuel, and he had been killed in an affray with poachers.

"I know; you mean Uncle Geoffrey, father's Uncle Geoffrey. He'd been the prodigal of the

Digitized by Google

family," put in Hubert, who was eleven years old, and consequently well-informed on many subjects.

"What is a prodigal?" asked Molly, who was only eight, and nearly as much addicted to forgetting as Ellen herself.

"Why the man in the Bible that wasted his substance in riotous living, and had to feed swine—pigs, you know," retorted Hubert, sharply. These lapses of memory on the part of Molly always annoyed him; he had even been known to pinch her on former occasions, when he had caught her tripping in similar fashion.

"There's always a prodigal in this family," remarked Ellen, with a grave wag of her head, and a darkly-mysterious aspect.

"Father's Uncle Geoffrey is buried in the mausoleum in Framstock churchyard, and there is a tablet about him in the north aisle," Hubert said with crushing finality, as if daring Ellen to refute his statement.

But she was quite equal to the occasion, "His bones are there belike, and as much of his body as hasn't gone to dust yet; but his spirit—the part of him, poor man, which ought to have been in heaven—where's that?" she demanded in sepulchral tones, and the children shivered until their teeth chattered.

Digitized by Google

"Have you seen it?" asked Hubert, in a low voice, whilst Molly covered her face with her hands, and shook almost as much as if she had a touch of marsh ague.

"I should hope not; I should solemnly hope I never may see such a sight. It is a shame, I say, that the poor fellow is kept wandering about the world like this, frightening respectable people out of their senses, and giving such a bad name to this house."

"Has it a bad name?" demanded Hubert, in angry surprise. He was a De Grey, every inch of him, and this implied slur was distinctly displeasing.

"Of course: haunted houses always do have a bad name," asserted Ellen, nodding her head.

"But the poor ghost, why can't he go to heaven and be happy? Couldn't the vicar help him?" Molly asked in a pitying tone, her mouth beginning to quiver, as if tears were not far off.

"Nothing can help him till old Jake Frimpton dies, or somebody kills him," replied Ellen, shaking her head dolefully.

"Why Jake Frimpton—what has he to do with it?" demanded both children in a breath.

"Because it was his hand—Jake's—that killed him, poor man; and why they didn't make Jake

Digitized by Google

swing for it there and then is more than I've ever been able to understand; my mother says he got off because the keepers were armed to the teeth, and the poachers had nowt but their fists to help themselves with."

"But Jake couldn't have killed father's uncle with only his fists," objected Hubert, clenching his own, and aiming a blow at an imaginary enemy.

"Well, he did do it, that's all I know, and the poor ghost of Mr. Geoffrey De Grey has haunted the old quarry ever since, as many could tell you that have seen it."

"Oh dear, how tired it must be, poor thing!" exclaimed Molly the pitiful. "Hubert, what would you do if you saw it?"

"I—I think I should tell it to go away, and cease troubling the place," said Hubert.

"It is a deal more likely that you would go yourself, and that as fast as your legs could carry you, for ghosts aren't pleasant things to meet, Master Hubert, which anybody would tell you that had happened to see one," retorted Ellen, as she picked up the tray of tea-things, and hurried away downstairs, forgetting to shut the door, according to her usual habit, and remaining deaf to the shouts of the children, as they called after her.

"I believe she leaves us to shut the door on

Digitized by Google

purpose," grumbled Hubert, as he banged it with as much violence as if the door, and not Ellen, was the aggressor in this particular instance.

"Must you begin lessons directly?" asked Molly wistfully, as he proceeded to spread the table with lesson-books, exercise paper, an inkstand, and two slates.

"Yes, or I must stick at it until bedtime. Old Farleigh knows how to take it out of a fellow, I must say."

"Mother wouldn't like you to call the vicar old Farleigh; it isn't gentlemanly," corrected Molly, with a prim air of superiority, that made Hubert feel he would like to fling his French grammar at her head.

"I was speaking the truth—he is old; see how bald he is; and he does take it out of me, no mistake about it."

Molly did not reply, saving by a heavy sigh, as, conscientious little soul that she was, she rose from the low chair by the fire, where she had been sitting since tea, and got her own small pile of lesson-books from the shelf.

Her studies, owing to the illness of her governess, had been rather perfunctory of late; but for the last two weeks, Miss Bentley, the doctor's daughter from Charlesford, had cycled up to Rock Grange every day in order to carry on the work of tuition

Digitized by Google

until her own governess should be well enough to return.

Hubert went down the hill, and across the valley to Framstock Vicarage, to read every day with Mr. Farleigh; but he always came back in time for lunch at half-past one, and the children had the afternoon for their own recreations until schoolroom tea at five o'clock, after which came lessons until bedtime.

It was rather a lonely life for them, with no resident governess to keep them company; but Mrs. De Grey was very much of an invalid, whilst their father was mostly visiting his friends, or being visited by them, hunting, fishing, shooting, and filling in the odd days with golfing on the Charlesford links, until between business and pleasure, he was one of the most hard-working men in the countryside.

When there was no company in the house, Mrs. Wills came in sometimes, to sit knitting for an hour by the schoolroom fire, just to keep them in order, she said, and to see that they did not waste their study time.

But several gentlemen were dining at the Grange on this particular evening, so Mrs. Wills was busy enough on her own account, and had no time at all to spare for the children.

Digitized by Google

"I wonder if it is true that old Jake Frimpton killed father's Uncle Geoffrey?" Hubert said in a speculative fashion, as he dog's-eared the leaves of a new book on botany, which the vicar had given him that day, just to give it a familiar look, and take off somewhat from the raw newness of its aspect.

"Ellen said it was the keepers that were armed; father's uncle wasn't a keeper, was he?" inquired Molly, in dubious tones.

"Of course not. But gentlemen go out with their keepers sometimes, when the poachers are troublesome, as I shall go when I'm a little older."

Molly shivered, thinking privately that she would rather the poachers had every pheasant, hare, and rabbit to be found in the preserves at Rock Grange, than be compelled to face the poachers on her own account, but she did not say so, knowing well that Hubert would scoff at her, and say unpleasant things concerning the foolishness of girls in general, and of herself in particular. Instead, she asked timidly—

"What did Ellen mean by saying there was always a prodigal in this family?"

Hubert frowned, until his eyebrows almost touched each other.

"I expect she meant Uncle Eric," he said slowly.

Digitized by Google

Molly dropped her book with a clatter on to the floor, whilst the tears gathered in her eyes, and her face wore a look of distressful dismay.

"Uncle Eric, did you say? Why, I love him better than any one after father, mother, and you. Oh, surely he can't be a prodigal, he is such a dear!"

"I'm afraid he is, though," retorted Hubert, gloomily. "When Colonel Steyne was here partridge shooting in September, I heard him telling young Mr. Wessel that Eric De Grey was a regular bad lot, and a disgrace to the name. And don't you remember how angry father was, the last time Uncle Eric was here, and how mother turns the subject when we speak of him now in father's presence?"

"Do you mean the time when those two shabby men came and fetched him away on the day when he was putting a new chimney to my dolls' house?" she asked, and then laid her head down upon the table, crying as if her heart would break.

Hubert did his very best to console her, refraining with wonderful forbearance from calling her silly, even going so far as to mop up her tears with his own handkerchief, which was so exceedingly grimy, and smelled so strongly of dog-kennel and

Digitized by Google

stable, that she was forced to leave off crying in sheer self-defence.

Hubert felt rather depressed himself, for until he had heard what Colonel Steyne said to Mr. Wessel, he had believed his Uncle Eric to be the embodiment of every manly virtue.

To shake off this sensation of melancholy, and to raise his sister's spirits likewise, he began to talk of how he would like to pay old Jake Frimpton out for that act of the past, which had sent Geoffrey De Grey to an untimely grave.

"I should like to take that ghost to frighten old Jake, until he died of sheer terror," he said, with clenched fists and flashing eyes.

"But that would be like your killing Jake, and then he would come to haunt the Grange, too, wouldn't he?" asked Molly.

This query being rather a poser, Hubert told her to shut up talking, as he had his lessons to learn.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

THE POACHING FRAY.

STONEDEN was a wide, desolate parish, abounding in quarries of slate and sandstone. In one part it had iron-works, but these just now were deserted, owing to the expense of digging the ironstone and conveying it seven miles to a railway station, this being greater than the profits resulting from the labour.

As is sometimes the case, the people of the parish matched their surroundings, and it would have been difficult to find another parish in the country that contained so many law-breakers and ne'er-do-weels. Poaching was the favourite occupation of these detrimentals in winter time, and as Mr. De Grey's were the best stocked preserves in the district, it was he who suffered most at the hands of this sporting portion of the community.

Digitized by Google

Winter was setting in early, indeed it mostly did set in early at Stoneden, and stayed late too, as a rule. The primroses were always in bloom at Ramsfield and Framstock a good fortnight before they ventured on flowering in the cold, bleak lanes of Stoneden.

The first fall of snow came at the middle of November, so Miss Bentley and her bicycle had to stay at home, until the roads were clear, whilst Molly went tobogganing on the slopes of the lower terrace, and wished that the snow would stay on the ground until Easter.

With the snow came much hardship and poverty among the labouring classes, for work of all kinds was practically at a standstill, and groups of idle men, with lowering, hopeless faces, clustered about the doors of public houses and forges, or anywhere else that gave promise of warmth to their shivering bodies.

Molly wondered they did not try tobogganing in order to induce more rapid circulation, and even suggested to Hubert that he should give them a few lessons in the exhilarating art.

But he did not take the hint, only talked largely of what they might do in the way of snow-heaving in order to earn an honest penny, and keep themselves warm likewise.

Digitized by Google

"There is no fun in shovelling snow, unless you do snow-balling too," protested Molly, who liked other people to have good times as well as herself.

"Oh, they have fun enough, and we have to suffer for it," retorted the boy, bitterly. "It was only this morning that I heard Biles telling father he and the under-keepers had hardly been to bed for the last two weeks, but just had to snatch a little sleep in the middle of the day, as best they could!"

"Why?" asked Molly, her blue eyes opening wider.

"Poachers. And yet, in spite of all their care, some of the covers are nearly thinned out, and next week is the big shoot," Hubert answered crossly, being very much of a sportsman at heart, and taking a lively interest in aught that had to do with dogs and guns, feathers and fur.

Molly mused on this information in a very divided frame of mind. Down at the bottom of her heart, she thought shooting dreadfully cruel sport, and always began to cry when the day's bag was laid out on the upper terrace, and the people in the house went out to look at the beautiful dead pheasants, and the rabbits and hares, which in life had been so frolicsome and happy.

It did not do to give utterance to any of these thoughts in the presence of Hubert, though she

Digitized by Google

often whispered them into the sympathetic ear of Mrs. De Grey on Sunday afternoons, when she and her mother were alone together.

Every day after this, Biles came up to Rock Grange early in the morning to report to his master on the state of the covers, and discuss with him the prospects of the big shoot. Hubert was present at most of these conferences, and retailed to Molly afterwards items of news regarding the doings of the poachers, and the depredations they were nightly committing; and so the day before the big shoot arrived.

The countenance of Biles on this particular morning was gloomy and overcast. A very big raid had been made on the cover most jealously guarded, and the poor keeper was in a condition of despair. Hearing shots in a neighbouring cover nearly half a mile away, he had drawn his watchers off in pursuit of those wandering shots, had spent hours in toiling about the country on a false scent, only to find on coming back to the cover from which he had started, that the poachers had been before him, in the place of all others that had been most carefully watched hitherto.

"I have never known them so bad as this!" exclaimed Mr. De Grey, in a tone of great exasperation.

Digitized by Google

"Nor I, sir," replied the much-to-be-pitied head-keeper. "And we're thinking, sir, that it isn't all the country folks—they wouldn't have the sense or the cunning—but it is some one else with education and breeding belike, who is making so free with the game this year." Here Biles stammered and hesitated, getting red in the face, and confused in manner—a state of things, however, not observed by his master, yet duly noted by the keen eyes of the boy, who as usual made a third at the interview.

"A gentleman, do you mean? A pretty sort of gentleman, indeed, to go sneaking about all night in another's preserves, helping himself to pheasants and hares!" stormed Mr. De Grey, who had thoroughly lost his temper over the business.

"Perhaps he thought he had a right to them, a sort of right," answered Biles, with so much covert meaning in his tone that Mr. De Grey, after staring at him for a moment, went curiously grave and silent, ending the colloquy a moment later, and going off to his study alone, whilst Hubert ran away in search of Molly, and the keeper went back to his work.

A number of visitors arrived that day; there was always a large house party for the big shoot, and this year there was to be a ball at Charlesford Priory, on the night of the following day.

Digitized by Google

Molly was called in from her favourite sport on the lower terrace before it had begun to grow dusk even, and after prolonged toilet agonies under the hands of Ellen Samuel, the schoolroom maid, emerged from her chamber, as dainty and fairy-like as any little maiden need wish to be.

Running down the broad front stairs, she ensconced herself in a nook conveniently near to the hall door, to watch the arrivals. Hubert was nowhere to be seen, and she was wondering where he could possibly be hiding himself, when, just as the wheels of the first carriage sounded on the gravel outside, he came running into the hall, untidy and dirty from some expedition in the woods.

"Oh, Hubert!" exclaimed Molly, edging further away as he came up to her, lest the immaculate character of her own get-up might catch the infection of his disarray.

"Hush, I can't stay, I can hear wheels; but oh, there is a to-do among the keepers, and there's going to be a regular battle to-night if the poachers come!"

Molly uttered a little cry of dismay, a "regular battle" might mean killed as well as wounded, and her sympathetic heart was already aching for those who would have to suffer in the fray.

But Hubert had dashed away again, and she

Digitized by Google

could hear his heavy boots clattering along the passage leading to the back stairs, as the butler flung wide the door to usher in the first guest.

Molly shrank behind the heavy curtains of the window, near which she had stationed herself. She was crying, and it would not do to appear before the visitors with a tearful visage. A little sniffing and gulping, with a vigorous use of her pocket-handkerchief, served to banish the tears, however, and then she emerged from her hiding-place and crept away to the drawing-room, but with all the spring and gaiety gone from her walk, whilst her pleasure in her new frock and pretty white slippers was gone also.

A tall lady, dressed in furs and velvet, was sitting on a lounge talking to Mrs. De Grey, several gentlemen also being present. Molly entered so quietly that no one noticed her, and standing by the side of her mother's tea-table, she had leisure to look about her.

Mrs. De Grey was slight and fragile in appearance, but to-night she was looking much more delicate than usual, whilst there was a redness about her eyes as if she had been weeping, though her manner was bright and cheerful, as befitted a hostess in welcoming her guests.

As was natural, the conversation turned upon

Digitized by Google

shooting and the depredations of the poachers, whilst Molly shivered anew, and felt the tears come up in her eyes when she thought of the poor keepers, and to her mind, the equally poor poachers, who might meet in warfare that night.

But she forgot her trouble by-and-by, and enjoyed the tea-hour amazingly, going back to the schoolroom with a sigh when the dressing bell sounded, vainly wishing she was grown-up, or at least as old as Hubert, who was permitted occasionally to go into the dining-room for dessert.

So many hours in the open air, cold as it was, had made her sleepy, and she was easily persuaded to go to bed an hour before her usual time, although by so doing she missed seeing Hubert when he came up from the dining-room.

Her bedroom looked out over the old quarry towards Framstock and the wooded hills beyond, the new quarry, where the stone was dug, at the present time being on the other side of the house, and nearer to Charlesford. It was a wide and pretty view, but to-night Molly turned away from it with a shiver, and was glad when Ellen drew the blind down.

It was past midnight when the little girl awoke with a start, and sat up in bed wondering what had aroused her. The night lamp was burning dimly

Digitized by Google

in the corner, and through the open door of the next room she could hear the heavy breathing of Ellen Samuel. But it was not this which had caused her waking, and made her start up in sudden fright—a moment of listening and the noise came again, sounds of firing, and hoarse shouts and cries.

This was more than the eight-year-old Molly could endure, and taking a frantic dive into the shelter of the bedclothes, she screamed in shrill tones for Ellen to come to her aid.

It usually took a large amount of shouting to rouse the schoolroom-maid from her slumbers; but on this particular occasion she was quickly bending over Molly's bed, endeavouring to console the frightened child, though her own teeth were chattering from some other cause than mere chilliness.

Molly would not say what had roused her, but lay with her head under the bedclothes, sobbing and crying, whilst Ellen bustled about the room, turning up the lamp, rousing the fire to a cheerful blaze, and knocking the furniture about with so much vigour and noise, that it was not possible for any sounds from the cold, white world outside to penetrate into the cosy room, where the little girl lay in a miserable heap under the blankets.

But later, when Molly had sobbed herself to

Digitized by Google

sleep from sheer grief and weariness, Ellen crept softly from the room to the window at the end of the long corridor, and gently lifting the sash, craned her head out to listen.

She drew it in again swiftly after a minute, and her teeth were chattering worse than ever.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

MOLLY SEES THE GHOST.

THERE was a ray of frosty sunshine peeping in at Molly's window when next she opened her eyes. And she sprang up in bed with a jubilant shout of welcome for the new day that was born, forgetting entirely the troubles of the previous night.

Bath and breakfast duly disposed of, there was the daily half-hour's penance at the piano to be gone through, and then she would be free to do as she pleased, until the bell rang for luncheon at half-past one o'clock.

Hubert was not visible, having started off to the vicarage before eight o'clock, in order to get through such work as Mr. Farleigh could not be induced to excuse or forego until the next day.

There was time to think, whilst the scales and

Digitized by Google

exercises were pounded out by Molly's blundering little fingers, and she stumbled and floundered worse than ever this morning over the sharps and flats, winding up by playing "Bonnie Dundee" in three different keys, to the horror of Mr. Cyril Blandford, who, owing to the fulness of the house, had been given the bedroom over the schoolroom. This gentleman was a musical enthusiast, and given moreover to very late rising; but Molly's performances on the piano were so appalling to his cultured ear, that he was forced into rising early that he might escape the torture.

She was thinking of the poachers, and wondering what had been happening in the woods whilst she slept, remembering that scared waking in the night, when Ellen had made such a noise in the room. She would have liked to run off that very minute to gain some information on the subject, but being rigidly conscientious in the length and extent of her practising, the scales and exercises had the first turn, to the great disgust of Mr. Cyril Blandford, who was thereby forced into being in time for breakfast.

"Ellen, Ellen, I want my thick boots—quick, please—and will you tell me whether the poachers were hurt last night?" Molly panted, being out of breath with her hurried chase after the schoolroom-

Digitized by Google

maid directly practice-time was over, and whom she finally ran to earth in the store-cupboard outside the housekeeper's room.

"I'll bring your boots at once, Miss Molly. I was just coming up with them, when Mrs. Wills called me to help her here for a few minutes. It is such a bright morning, that you'll have a fine playtime out in the snow."

Ellen spoke hastily, and her face when she emerged from the cupboard had a scared expression, just as if she had seen something to frighten her very much; whilst as she followed Molly up to the schoolroom, carrying the boots in her hand, her teeth chattered again, as if they had all become suddenly loose.

"Did the poachers get hurt, Ellen?" persisted Molly, when the boots were on her feet, and one was half-way buttoned.

"No, miss, not as far as I have heard," Ellen answered, with stolid reserve.

"Was anybody hurt?" demanded the little girl, her curiosity piqued into greater activity by the mystery of the other's manner.

Ellen paused, began to speak, paused again in an unwonted hesitation of indecision, and finally burst out—

"Oh, miss, poor Biles is hurt shocking! The

Digitized by Google

doctor says he'll hardly live throughout the day; and I've seen the ghost!"

Molly jumped up, her face quivering with excitement, and by her abrupt movement upsetting Ellen on to the floor.

"Have you really seen the ghost? And oh, Ellen, do tell me, what was it like?"

But the schoolroom-maid picked herself up with an aggrieved air.

"Really, miss, I don't see how I'm to get your boots put on if you are going to roll me over every five minutes in this fashion, and me with such a lot of work to do this morning, besides being as you may say half-distracted about poor Biles, whose wife is third cousin to my mother's sister's husband, which makes him into a sort of relation, don't you see?"

"I'm very sorry Biles got hurt, though he isn't very kind to Hubert and me, and won't let us go in the covers when the bluebells are in bloom," returned Molly, with the grave dignity of a De Grey; then she burst out in eager, coaxing tones, "But Ellen, dear Ellen, do tell me where the ghost was, and just exactly what it is like. Oh, shouldn't I like to see it myself!"

Ellen shivered, and again her teeth chattered dismally.

Digitized by Google

"I wouldn't talk like that, if I were you, Miss Molly."

"Why not? The ghost wouldn't hurt me, would it?" Molly asked, with a sudden blanching of her rosy cheeks, she being very much of a coward regarding physical pain or discomfort.

"No, no," cried the maid, earnestly, reading aright the look of fear, and anxious concerning the consequences to herself should the little lady be frightened; "ghosts are the most harmless sort of creatures; they couldn't hurt any one if they tried."

"Then what makes you seem so afraid?" demanded practical Molly, who liked to have all things made plain to her that appeared in any way obscure.

Ellen hesitated, then took refuge in prevarication, which, as every one knows, is merely a grand-sounding name for a lie.

"I'm so upset about Biles, who is a sort of relation, you see: it is that which makes me feel bad, not the ghost, which is as harmless, you may say, as that streak of sunshine there."

Molly drew a long breath of relief, then demanded urgently—

"But what was it like, Ellen? Did it drag a long chain, and had it eyes like red-hot coals?"

Digitized by Google

"No, no," replied the schoolroom-maid, wishing heartily that she had never said anything about the matter, and anxious to soothe Molly's very evident excitement. "It was a very quiet, nice sort of a ghost, just the figure of a man with white clothes on; nothing to make any one nervous."

"Perhaps it was a man," argued Molly.

"It was no man—no living man—of that I am certain," Ellen answered, impressively dropping her voice to a sepulchral whisper; "and it disappeared in the old quarry, where, as you know, miss, outside folks are not allowed to go."

Molly's boots were on and buttoned by this time, and as Mrs. Wills had again summoned Ellen to her aid, the little girl was left to her own meditations, which appeared to be of a very profound character, as she went slowly down the stairs and out on to the terrace in the sunshine of the bright, frosty morning.

Her sledge—a new one of Canadian make—was slung over her shoulder, and she stopped at the end of the upper terrace, to take a long, steady look down into that part of the old quarry into which the ghost must have disappeared.

It was very hard on the poor spook, she thought, that it should be compelled to haunt the earth in hunger and cold, when, but for the murderous

Digitized by Google

hand of Jake Frimpton, it might have died and gone to Paradise, like other people.

Her musings were interrupted at this point by the appearance of Hubert, who came rushing up the hill as hard as he could tear.

"Here's a jolly shame!" he shouted as he drew within earshot.

"What is a shame?" asked Molly.

"There's to be no shoot to-day, because of poor old Biles; the keepers have been out in every direction warning people not to come, and father has been backwards and forwards to Biles's house ever since the poor old fellow was carried in."

"Ellen said the doctor thinks Biles will die," Molly said gravely.

"Yes, they say he hasn't a chance, poor old chap; but isn't it a sell about the shoot?" and Hubert kicked savagely at the frozen lumps of snow lying on the edge of the path.

"I expect the pheasants and hares are not a bit sorry," responded Molly, with a shrewd wag of her head; and then, getting on her sledge, she went flying down the slope, whilst Hubert, with a shout and a yell, flung himself on behind, adding by his extra weight to the tremendous velocity of the flying sledge. Crash into the bank of snow at the bottom went the two, emerging a moment later

Digitized by Google

half-smothered in snow, breathless and rosy, to scramble up the bank once more, and come tearing down in the same headlong fashion.

Half-a-dozen times or more the frolic was repeated, and then, just as they reached the terrace, panting and puffing, and with the sledge in tow, Ellen came flying down to them, saying that some carriage outing was planned, which was to include the children also.

Away went the two in the wake of Ellen, forgetting all about the sledge, which stood leaning against the seat at the top of the slope, and close to where the steps led down into the old quarry.

A most delightful expedition it proved, and they did not return until the dusk had fallen. And even then Hubert went off with a party of gentlemen to see some skating by torchlight on the river at Charlesford.

It was not until the dressing-bell rang, and Molly had left the drawing-room, that she remembered her sledge, which she had left on the terrace in the morning.

A little cry of dismay escaped her at the recollection, for she knew that by morning the bright steel runners would be spotted with rust, whilst if the weather broke up, as people said it was going

Digitized by Google

to do shortly, the damp of melting snow would probably spoil her pretty toy.

It was of no use to ask Ellen to go for it—she would almost as soon jump into the river at Charlesford as go near the old quarry at night. And the other servants were expert in making excuses in the same direction, as Molly had proved by experience.

She would go herself; the side door was sure to be unfastened, probably ajar, and she could run down to the lower terrace, seize the sledge, and be back in the house again before any one had time to miss her.

Flying into the schoolroom, she dragged on a pair of thick boots, and, snatching up a little cape to fling round her shoulders, she darted down the long passage and out through the side door into the snowy night.

There were just a few stars peeping forth, but oh, it was dreary out here in the cold and the snow! and, half regretting her temerity, Molly scudded along the upper terrace like a frightened white rabbit, and was picking her way down the slippery steps to the next level, when by some accident she slipped and slid all the way to the bottom before she could recover herself.

Too frightened to cry out, she lay panting at the

Digitized by Google

bottom, wondering how many of her legs were broken, and whether she would ever recover the use of her arms again—when in the silence she heard a deep groan, as of some person in pain.

Scrambling hastily to her feet, forgetting her bruises, and only thankful to find that arms and legs still served their appointed purposes, she rushed along the lower terrace, to the seat at the top of the steps, and, picking up her sledge, was about to hurry back again with as much speed as if she had wings to her feet, when, happening to glance over the wall that safeguarded the end of the path, she distinctly saw some person walking in the old quarry.

Too frightened now to flee, she just stood and shivered, whilst the person, whoever it was, glided on and into the shadow out of sight; and as he went he groaned again.

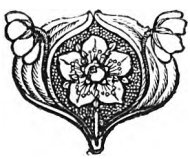
The ghost! That was what it was. The poor unquiet spirit of her father's uncle Geoffrey. What would Hubert say when she told him she had seen a real live ghost?

But dare she tell him? Molly paused in her hurried run to the upper terrace in order to turn that question over in her mind. Hubert had talked very loudly of what he would do to poor old Jake Frimpton if only he got the chance; thus to her

Digitized by Google

method of reasoning it seemed scarcely wise to obtrude the subject of the ghost at all, lest he should undertake to avenge the untimely end of his ancestor.

But she had seen the ghost with her own eyes, the real live ghost that Ellen said was of such a peculiarly harmless nature; and having seen it once, there was nothing at that moment Molly De Grey so ardently desired, as to see it again.



Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

MOLLY'S NEW PET.

THE side door stood slightly open, just as when Molly slipped out in quest of her sledge, and hurrying in, she made her way to the schoolroom, meeting no one in the passage as she went.

The sight of the warm, cosy room, and the cheerful fire, awoke pangs of pity in her tender little heart, for the poor ghost who wandered, moaning, in the cold.

Was he hungry? she wondered. And did he have a bed to sleep on, in the dark, quiet night? Or did he always stroll to and fro, moaning as he went? But whether he had a bed or not, he must at least require something to eat, and perhaps it was hunger that made him moan.

It was dreadful to be hungry. Molly thought of that time last summer, when she and her governess

Digitized by Google

went out for a long, long walk, and lost their sandwich tin. She recalled the pangs of semi-starvation which she endured, in the long tramp home across the hills, and could have sat down and wept at the mere recollection, but refrained because the poor ghost in the quarry must be in a worse plight than that even, and she wanted to think of some way to help him.

Her eyes fell on a big box of bon-bons standing on the table. They were her own; should she take them to him? But bon-bons, delightful though they were, would hardly be satisfactory alone to any one who had missed his dinner, and perhaps breakfast also.

People who were very hungry indeed, always wanted bread—and meat when they could get it. Plainly then, bread and meat was what this poor starved spook was needing; and that fact settled in her own mind beyond the shadow of a doubt, she started at once on a foraging expedition to supply his want, to the best of her ability.

It was the busiest hour of the busy day, and the numerous servants were all intent on their duties, no one having a moment to spare to look after Molly, who was used to wandering about at her own sweet will, and taking care of herself generally.

There was no one in the larder, though in the

Digitized by Google

big kitchen beyond, cook and her subordinates were working at high pressure, whilst the delicious odours of baking, boiling, steaming, stewing, and frying were almost as satisfying as a meal—at least so Molly thought, but she was not very hungry just then.

A loaf of bread was promptly seized, and she looked about for some meat. That was harder to find, but presently by dint of poking and prying, she found a piece of cold bacon on a dish, and taking that also, hurried back to the schoolroom, where she packed the bread and bacon in the bon-bon box, with as many of the bon-bons as she could squeeze in beside them.

It was necessary this time to exercise caution in making her exit, for dinner was being carried in; but by watching for an opportunity when the long passage was momentarily empty, Molly again succeeded in escaping unobserved, and racing down the upper terrace managed to take her way to the lower level without a tumble this time, and running to the seat at the top of the steps, placed her box of provisions upon it.

This done, she hesitated a moment. Suppose the ghost had not seen her come, and should not think to look in that particular place for food, how could she let him know of the treat in store?

Digitized by Google

A moment to gather up her courage, for the stars had given up shining and gone to bed, whilst a moaning wind crept up the valley from the west, and the lights of the house seemed very far away; then stepping towards the protecting wall, she sent forth a quavering little shout into the dark quarry below—

"Please, Mr. Ghost, I've put some bread and bacon in a box on the seat up here, for your supper; but leave the box, please, because it will do for another time."

There was no response, only from somewhere across the snowy valley, where the village of Framstock clothed the opposite hill, came the howl of a supperless dog, and at the sound she turned and fled back to the house.

So headlong was her rush, that when she pushed open that friendly side door, she tumbled into the arms of Ellen, who at last was beginning to concern herself as to the whereabouts of her charge.

"Now, Miss Molly, as if it wasn't enough to have you rampaging about all day in the snow, but you must go rushing out at night too. Where have you been to, I should like to know?"

"I went down on to the lower terrace to bring up my sledge; I left it there this morning, and forgot

Digitized by Google

all about it," replied Molly, panting with excitement not unmixed with dismay, for she was very conscious that her reply to Ellen lacked entire truthfulness.

"Well, well, I wonder you don't catch your death of cold, dancing in and out in this fashion; what with your pets, and what with your playthings, I never saw the like. But come to the fire, miss, and I'll see that your feet are warm and dry, and then belike you'll take no hurt," said Ellen, hurrying her away to the warm schoolroom, that was such a contrast in its bright comfort to the dark, dreary night outside.

Molly's conscience, however, was giving her many a twinge, and presently she said, nervously—

"I didn't tell you quite all the truth, Ellen; I did go after my sledge the first time, but when I had brought it in, I went out again."

"And for what, I should like to know?" queried the handmaiden with uplifted hands. Afraid to stir out of doors herself, when night had fallen, the child's action in going out the second time struck her as an astonishing escapade.

"I do not care to tell you that," retorted Molly, with so much chilly dignity, that Ellen was greatly impressed by it, and went away with the little girl's wet boots, muttering to herself that she supposed

Digitized by Google

it was some new pet that had tempted the little lady forth into the darkness of the night.

Hubert came home half an hour before Molly's bedtime, bursting into the schoolroom with a great noise and clatter, shouting to Ellen to bring him something to eat, as he was in a condition bordering on starvation.

"Did you have a nice time?" inquired Molly, who was tucked up in an easy-chair by the fire, with a picture book on her knees, looking very sleepy and comfortable.

"Oh, jolly! But it's the last of the frost, I'm afraid, for the wind has changed, and it is moaning up the valley from the west, fit to make you cry to hear it."

Molly nodded with great intelligence, but did not see fit to tell him that she had heard the sough of the western wind, though happily without weeping.

"Poor old Biles is still alive," went on Hubert. He was satisfying his hunger now with some of the savoury viands brought by Ellen, and which had come out from the dining-room.

"Is he—will he get better now?" Molly asked, letting her book slip on to the floor.

"No one knows. This morning the two doctors said he couldn't possibly live the day out, and it

Digitized by Google

was a waste of money to send for another opinion. But father packed Morgan off to Charlesford to telegraph to Horford for Dr. Basle, who, when he came, declared there was a chance, just a chance, that poor old Biles might pull through."

"I'm so glad!" cried Molly, clapping her hands softly together.

"So I guess the man will be that shot him," retorted Hubert, with a grimness copied from his seniors.

"Who did shoot him?" she asked, her face growing serious.

"The police haven't found him yet, though they've been hunting all day through Framstock, Ramsfield, Stoneden, Charlesford, and everywhere else they could think of. The keepers say he was a young man, and appeared to be the leader, but no one seems to know who he was, or where he came from."

"I hope they won't find him; perhaps he didn't mean to shoot Biles; or if he hadn't fired his gun, Biles would have shot him," argued Molly, with the happy irresponsibility of youth.

"I guess Biles would have shot, and pretty straight too, if he had got the chance to do it," Hubert said, with a laugh.

"I am so sleepy," said Molly, with a tremendous

Digitized by Google

yawn. "Oh, Hubert, aren't you very sorry the weather is breaking—we shan't get any more tobogganing, if the snow goes away."

"But there will be hunting, and father says I may ride to hounds on Blackface, if I can manage to stick on."

"I wish I could ride to hounds," sighed Molly, getting out of her chair, though with some difficulty, because she was so very, very sleepy and tired.

"You are only a girl," asserted Hubert, in a tone of masculine superiority; "besides, you can only ride Neddy, and fancy riding to hounds on a donkey!" Here he went off into a burst of uncontrollable laughter at the fancy picture he had painted.

Molly drew herself up, feeling much aggrieved—she hated to be laughed at, and Hubert knew it.

"At least, I could stick on: Neddy has never thrown me yet," she said with chilly dignity, and then laughed a little as she recalled the last occasion when Blackface, the pony, had shot Hubert off on to the grass, very much to his own discomfiture, and her amusement.

He uttered an impatient exclamation, knowing only too well what she was laughing at, and began to turn over a pile of books on the table, for he had some lessons that must be prepared for Mr.

Digitized by Google

Farleigh in the morning, although he was almost as tired and sleepy as Molly herself.

"Good night," she said, another ripple of laughter playing on her lips, as she noticed his air of vexation.

"Good night," he responded half-sulkily; then burst out, "Oh, I say, Molly, I forgot to tell you before, you are not to practise after breakfast to-morrow morning."

"Why not?" she inquired innocently.

"Mother says the noise disturbed Mr. Cyril Blandford this morning. He is no end of a swell player, with three or four musical degrees, and I don't know what besides. He asked mother who taught you, and said your teacher ought to be banished to Siberia for letting you murder harmony in the style you did this morning, when you played 'Bonnie Dundee' in three different keys."

"Did I do that?" she asked. "I remember, I got rather confused. And I dare say Mr. Blandford used to make mistakes when he first began to learn music. I don't think he is nice at all; but I am glad I shan't have to practise. Good night, Hubert."

And Molly went to bed.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

SECRET MINISTRATIONS.

WHEN Molly awoke next morning, a wild storm of wind and rain was raging, and to her great disappointment she was kept a close prisoner to the house.

Half a dozen times between breakfast and luncheon did she go to the end of the long corridor upstairs, and peer from the window to see if she could discover her bonbon box on the seat at the top of the steps.

The atmosphere, however, was thick with rain, whilst the storm-wind flung the branches of the trees to and fro with so much violence that she could discern nothing clearly.

The houseful of visitors did their best at amusing themselves and each other, some of the ladies invading the schoolroom, and carrying Molly off to

Digitized by Google

play battledore and shuttlecock in the picture-gallery—a species of sport in which Molly fairly revelled.

After this came luncheon, which was the children's dinner; and at table a curious little scene occurred, which left a deep impression on at least one small person who witnessed it.

Mr. De Grey came in straight from a visit to his wounded keeper, his face gloomy, his manner much sterner than usual, although to the guests about his table he was as ever the refined and courteous host, perfect in manner and in tact.

The talk turned naturally on the delayed shooting, and the cause of its postponement, one gentleman asking Mr. De Grey if the injured man would be able to identify his assailant.

"It is the question we asked him when he first recovered consciousness, but he declined to answer," replied the host gravely.

"Dear me! how strange," remarked the lady who was sitting next to Molly; "perhaps the poor man was too ill even then to remember, and so could not tell."

"The doctor's opinion was that he would not tell," answered Mr. De Grey, with a slight yet distinct emphasis on the "would."

Mrs. De Grey, who had a glass lifted to her lips,

Digitized by Google

and was in the act of drinking, let it fall with a crash, whilst she herself sank back in her chair in a dead faint.

There was instant commotion—one running for salts, another for perfumes, and another for something else. But Mr. De Grey lifted his unconscious wife in his arms, and bore her off to her chamber, where Mrs. Wills and the lady's maid were promptly in attendance, while Molly, who had crept in unnoticed, hovered in the background.

The poor lady's first cry when she opened her eyes again was for her husband, who was instantly by her side, bending anxiously over her to know if she felt better.

"Oh, Robert!" she cried in a tone of such sadness that Molly, who stood in the shadow of the window curtain, was quite frightened by it. "Oh, Robert, be careful you take no rash steps! Suppose —suppose it should be——"

Her sentence was not finished; she had caught sight of Molly standing by the curtain—poor little Molly, who at that moment felt like a detected criminal, though in truth a very innocent one, since she had come in only to watch her mother's recovery, and with no disposition at all towards eavesdropping.

But Mr. De Grey needed no more words to assist

Digitized by Google

his understanding, and, drawing himself erect, he replied in a cold, stern tone—

"It can make no difference, Mary; I must do my duty in any case."

"If Biles can leave it, may not you?" she pleaded wistfully.

"No; his desire to shield the criminal is all the more reason why I should do my duty to the bitter end," he retorted harshly; and, turning his back upon her pleading gaze, he hastily left the room; and Molly, drawing near, essayed to comfort her mother, who was now weeping bitterly.

"Mother dear, I'm so sorry I overheard; I didn't mean to, you know, but was just standing there until you were better. And I didn't understand a word of what you said, indeed I didn't; and so it doesn't matter, does it?" she coaxed, her soft arms about her mother's neck, her plump, rosy cheek close pressed against the thin, pale one on the pillow.

"Oh, Molly, my baby, poor mother is so very, very unhappy," sobbed Mrs. De Grey.

"I'm so sorry," whimpered Molly, who by this time was crying too.

"You and Hubert must always love each other dearly—dearly!" said the lady, with such energetic irrelevance, that even Molly began to feel a stirring of curiosity as to what it all might mean.

Digitized by Google

"We do love each other very much—sometimes," she said slowly, her innate truthfulness compelling her to that most damaging qualification at the end.

"It must be always—always—not sometimes merely, if you want to be happy in your life, my Molly," replied the mother, straining the little girl closer to her heart, and kissing her fondly.

At this moment Mrs. Wills appeared again, and gently but firmly hustled Molly from the room, telling her that the invalid would recover quickest if left perfectly quiet.

The wild west wind had ceased to rage, the drizzling rain had merged into dripping fog, and under its damping influence the snow was slipping away as fast as it could go, the outside world, meanwhile, looking about as wet and dreary as it was possible for it to do.

Hubert was nowhere to be seen; some visitors were taking their departure, and every one in the house was either occupied or invisible when Molly came from her mother's chamber.

A fine chance this to see if the poor ghost had helped himself to the bread and bacon with which she had sought to supply his wants last night; and flying downstairs in search of boots, she slipped her feet into the first pair that came handy, and muffling a big cape about her shoulders, away

Digitized by Google

trotted Molly out into the damp and the fog, but not caring a jot for either.

There were sounds of dripping spouts and trickling water everywhere, whilst the lower terrace was like a shallow lake in places, where the ground was lowest; but Molly waded through the puddles, and thought it rather good fun.

The box was not on the seat where she had placed it, but underneath, where the rain and the damp could not touch it.

With a beating heart she stooped down to draw it forward, and then gave a cry of delight to find it empty, so evidently the poor ghost had appreciated her kindness on the previous night.

Tucking the box under her cape, she hurried back to the house, determined to slip out again when darkness fell, to bring further provision for this poor wandering, homeless spirit, that had come to be dependent on her bounty.

It was the night of the ball, and dinner was early in consequence. Only one or two people appeared in the drawing-room at tea, most of the lady visitors preferring to remain in their own rooms, whilst some of the gentleman guests had already taken their departure.

Mrs. De Grey did not leave her chamber again that day, not even to go into her dressing-room;

Digitized by Google

but Molly went up to make tea for her, and to fuss about generally, under the impression that she was making herself very useful indeed.

But she said nothing to her mother about the ghost, or the supper with which she had provided him on the previous evening. There was a good deal of latent shyness in her nature, and Mrs. De Grey was more of a stranger to her children than women with better health are apt to be.

"Don't take any more cake, darling: it is not good for you," said the invalid, as Molly stretched out her hand for a second large slice.

"It is not for myself, mother dear; I want it to give away. Mayn't I have it, if I promise not to eat one little crumb of it myself?"

Mrs. De Grey smiled, well-pleased at Molly's unselfish thought for her brother, it never once occurring to her that the intending recipient was other than Hubert, and she at once bestowed the requiring permission.

Molly went off in triumph to her room with the cake, where she packed it carefully into the bonbon box, and then began to wonder what she could put in to keep it company. A raid on the larder was out of the question to-night, so many servants were running in and out; whilst Hubert was in the schoolroom, and at any moment might take it into

Digitized by Google

his head to appear in the passage leading to the kitchen and larder.

There was a tin half-full of biscuits standing on the table by Molly's bed, and these she emptied into the box beside the cake, without a moment's delay; and catching sight of a long candle and a box of matches lying beside the china candlestick on her washstand, she wrapped them in paper and laid them on the top of the box.

This done, it only remained for her to slip out of the house unobserved, as on the previous night, and running down the terraces, place the box on the seat; then, not staying to shout, back again she hurried, intent on gaining the sure refuge of the house.

Hubert was growling and grumbling over his lessons in the schoolroom. He was not generally inclined to shirk his work, but now that there was a party at the Grange, it seemed to him manifestly unfair that Mr. Farleigh should expect as much from him as when there were no visitors at all.

He flung his books in a heap in the corner when Molly went into the room, suggesting a game of bagatelle with which to while away the hour before bedtime. As Molly had no lessons of her own to do, this proposition was very much to her mind, and

Digitized by Google

in a few minutes both children were deep in their game.

Presently Ellen Samuel came in, her face as white as her apron, her hands trembling so much that the glasses and plates on the tray she was carrying kept up a jingling accompaniment to her walk.

"What is the matter with you to-night?" Hubert asked, in a tone of mild exasperation, when she dropped one of the glasses on to his slippered foot as she passed, making him wince with pain.

"Matter enough," she groaned, setting the tray down upon the table, in such an unsteady fashion that another glass rolled off, though this second one was only cracked, not broken. "I'm all of a twitter, as you may say, and hardly know what I am about."

"We can see that without any telling, thank you," Hubert retorted, in a tone of chilly superiority. He was feeling that some apology was due to him for the hurt to his foot, although he was much too proud to even hint that he was suffering.

"It's good wages and a place that it is a privilege to have, whilst there couldn't be a kinder young gentleman and lady than you, Master Hubert and Miss Molly; but I don't see how my nerves are going to stand it much longer—no really I don't,"

Digitized by Google

and here Ellen lapsed into hysterical weeping, with her apron flung over her face.

"What is the matter?" demanded Hubert again, and this time in a very testy tone indeed. But Molly was silent, having a pretty accurate prevision of what was troubling the schoolroom-maid again.

"Ted Wheeler has just come up from Framstock; he came up through the grounds because it was so much nearest, and as he came along the upper terrace, he vows he saw the poor ghost of Mr. Geoffrey De Grey sitting on the seat at the top of the quarry steps."

"Fudge!" exclaimed Hubert. "I wonder what he will be seeing next?" and he burst into a shout of laughter, in which he was promptly joined by Molly, who desired to hide her confusion.

But Ellen wept on unconsoled.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

BILES PROVES OBSTINATE.

THE next week or ten days passed on with very little change in the condition of Biles, the wounded head-keeper. He was just alive, but any hour might snap the brittle thread that bound him to earth.

Never surely was an invalid better cared for. Dr. Basle came from Horford three times in one week, the Charlesford doctor was at the keeper's cottage with every morning that came, whilst the young practitioner who had lately set up in a modest way at Framstock, was in and out so many times in the twenty-four hours, that it might almost have been said he lived there.

So many nourishing things were sent from Rock Grange, with delicacies to tempt the appetite of the sufferer, that poor Mrs. Biles would have been hard put to it to know what to do with them all, but for her four healthy, hungry boys and girls,

Digitized by Google

who made a prompt clearance of anything and everything that was set before them.

Mr. De Grey came often to the cottage, to inquire for the sufferer, and sometimes when Mrs. Biles, who in these days was always tearful, begged the gentleman to walk up and see her husband, he would follow her into the shadowed room above, where his head-keeper lay bearing his pain with the courage of an old campaigner, and stooping over the bed he would ask in a low strained tone, "Biles, can you tell me to-day, who did it?"

But the keeper's answer was always just the same, a short, emphatic, "No."

"It is my belief, sir, that he knows well enough, only he won't say," Mrs. Biles said one day, as, with apron to her eyes, she ushered the gentleman down the dark little stairs and out through her tiny scullery to the front door of the cottage.

"That is my opinion also, Mrs. Biles; but he must be made to tell," Mr. De Grey answered in a hard, decided tone.

A tremor of anxiety shook the nervous, distressed woman, and shy and retiring though she was by nature, she waxed bold now in defence of her husband.

"No, sir, no! It might be fatal to worry him, poor dear. Dr. Basle says his only chance lies in

Digitized by Google

keeping quiet and easy in his mind. And I won't have him disturbed—no, not if it was to help in wringing the necks of a hundred poachers, always of course begging your pardon for speaking so free," and Mrs. Biles dropped four or five profound curtsies, as fast as she could, by way of atonement for daring to speak so freely in the presence of her husband's employer.

"I should be the last person to wish that he should be in any way excited," said Mr. De Grey in a soothing tone, "but can you not coax it out of him, Mrs. Biles, he would surely tell you—his wife?"

"I'm not so sure. Biles can be main obstinate when it pleases him; and if so be, sir, as he has made up his mind not to let on as to who shot him, I'm thinking the knowledge is likely to die with him, if so be it pleases the Lord to take him." So saying Mrs. Biles clapped her apron to her eyes, and cried harder than ever.

"Tut, tut! my good woman, you mustn't grieve in this fashion, or you won't be able to take care of your husband, and then whatever shall we do?" said Mr. De Grey in a lighter tone, anxious to stop the flow of the poor woman's tears.

"I know, sir, I know; but I'm so tired, that is what makes me cry so much," she said simply.

Digitized by Google

"Ah, night and day work, I suppose," he broke in sharply, adding in a gentler tone, "Now, Mrs. Biles, understand me once for all, there is nothing I so much desire in this world as that your husband should recover, and to this end no expense must be spared. You are worn out with nursing, and must have some one to help you; your house and family make more calls on your strength than is reasonable just now, and you must have help there also. I will pay for it. If money could restore your husband, I would gladly sacrifice the half of my fortune to see him well again. Here, take that, and when you need some more let me know," he said, pressing a couple of sovereigns into her unwilling hand.

"But, sir, his wages have been paid regularly, and it does seem like intrusion to take more, and Mrs. De Grey so kind in sending things too," expostulated the keeper's wife, in a trembling tone.

"Nonsense, nonsense, it is nothing," he said impatiently, adding in a tone of great bitterness, "I feel sometimes that if Biles dies, I shall never be able to hold up my head again."

"A kind gentleman, but peculiar very," was the comment of Mrs. Biles, as she watched the retreating figure of Mr. De Grey. "He couldn't have took on much more if he had shot Biles with his own

Digitized by Google

hand," and she shook her head sorrowfully, applying the apron once more to her eyes, yet consoled nevertheless by the two sovereigns which she clutched tightly in her hand.

It was two days after this, a fine mild morning with bright sunshine—April weather by mistake in December—that Mrs. De Grey came herself to the keeper's cottage.

She arrived in a low pony-chaise accompanied by Molly and a groom, and alighting, walked into the house with as little fuss or ceremony as if she had been merely the next-door neighbour of Mrs. Biles, instead of the lady from the great house on the hill.

Biles was a shade better that morning, and would be main glad to see the lady, Mrs. Biles said, almost overpowered by this unexpected honour, and scarcely knowing what she said or did. But she was not nearly so tearful and depressed in appearance as before, when Mr. De Grey had been to see her.

"Do not trouble to come up, Mrs. Biles, I can find the way quite well alone; it is the front room, I think, and I will be sure not to excite him," Mrs. De Grey said, moving towards the foot of the stairs, whilst the keeper's wife could only stand in the middle of the floor and curtsey, completely

Digitized by Google

bewildered by the taking-it-for-granted air with which the lady settled the matter.

"And the room ain't too tidy. There's that basin what he had his gruel in, standing on the chair by the bed; but there's no time to take it away now," muttered Mrs. Biles in dismayed soliloquy, as she gazed after Mrs. De Grey, yet made no attempt to follow her, seeing how evidently the lady preferred to go alone.

Biles was lying half-asleep, when a gentle rustling of silken garments, and a faint delicate perfume, roused him to the consciousness that he had a visitor.

"Biles," said Mrs. De Grey in her low pleasant tones, "Biles, do you know me?"

"Yes, ma'am, yes," he answered slowly, a look of keen trouble on his face; "did the master send you to try and get it out of me?"

"No, no! Mr. De Grey does not even know that I have come; he would not think me strong enough for the venture. But I had to make the effort to come, because I—I wanted to thank you, Biles, for your great kindness in—in not telling."

It was quite wonderful to see the change in Biles's face, at this halting, hesitating speech; he fairly glowed with delight and surprise.

"You can trust me, ma'am, to keep silent," he

Digitized by Google

murmured. "If so be it pleases God my time has come, the word will die with me; and if it pleases Him to raise me up again, why there'll be the less danger of harm coming from it."

"And no one else——?" began Mrs. De Grey; then stopped in an uncertain fashion.

But he understood still, and answered promptly, "No, ma'am; I don't think so. And if so be I drop a word, being off my head, why, that isn't evidence, you know, and I can contradict it when I come to my senses again."

Mrs. De Grey stood erect, a faint flush on her pale cheeks, a gleam of hope in her eyes.

"God bless you, Biles, for the comfort you have given me this morning; and oh, I am praying so earnestly that you may recover, for your own sake, and for—for——"

"I know, ma'am, and I'm hanging on to my life as hard as I can," he retorted brusquely, being much moved by the evidences of her emotion.

Then Mrs. De Grey turned and glided down the stairs again, as gently and quietly as she had come up; and, with a cheering word to Mrs. Biles, passed out to her carriage.

"Mother, I've been reading those placards; what do they mean?" asked Molly, pointing to the posters hanging on the blank wall opposite the

Digitized by Google

head keeper's cottage, and which set forth, in letters an inch long, that twenty pounds reward would be given to the person who could give evidence which might lead to the conviction of the man who had shot the gamekeeper Biles.

Mrs. De Grey shivered; those posters were like a nightmare to her, yet, wherever she drove, at every guide-post turning and bit of blank wall, they met her gaze, for Mr. De Grey was a man who was apt to do things thoroughly when he did begin; and just because there was a hideous suspicion of disgrace and the family dishonour lurking behind the mystery of the unknown poacher's identity, so was he the more rigidly exact in every effort made to bring the culprit to justice. So far not the slightest thread of a clue had rewarded the search; no one had shown the faintest desire to possess the reward, and the local police were completely baffled.

"They are only the papers stating the amount of the reward offered for the conviction of the person who shot poor Biles, Molly dear," replied her mother, hoping that by the directness of her answer she might effectually quench the child's curiosity.

But the word "conviction" conveyed no meaning to Molly's understanding, and she cried out in an appalled tone—

Digitized by Google

"Does it mean that twenty pounds will be given to the man who hurt Biles? Why, it is like paying him to be wicked!"

"No, no; the money would not go to the culprit, but to the person who betrayed him," said Mrs. De Grey, faintly; wishing now that she had let explanations alone and silenced Molly at the beginning.

"Then why doesn't Biles tell, and get the money himself?" demanded Molly, with a very puzzled expression of face.

"Perhaps," said her mother, in a voice that faltered very much, "he does not feel quite sure about it; in a moment like that, you know, Molly, it would be so easy to blunder in an identity, and think how dreadful it would be if he accused the wrong man."

"Hubert says Biles does know, only he won't tell," asserted the child, more interested in this problem of unselfish reticence than in anything else at that particular moment.

Mrs. De Grey was silent, and Molly, noticing her air of extreme weariness, forbore to trouble her with any more questions during the homeward drive, contenting herself with the resolve to attack Hubert on the subject on the very next occasion that she could get five minutes alone with him.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

THE GHOST AGAIN.

AND all this time, evening by evening, regularly as the dusk fell, Molly had carried food of some sort to the seat at the top of the quarry steps; finding always when she went in the morning that the supply of provisions of the previous night had disappeared.

Sometimes, when feeling particularly brave, she would linger a little, in the hope of getting a sight of her peculiar pet; but no clank of chain, or rustle of sepulchral garments rewarded her watching, and she was forced to run away with her desire unsatisfied, of seeing a ghost at close quarters, and hearing it speak.

By the way it occurred to her to wonder if ghosts did speak, and she puzzled over the question for a whole ten minutes by the clock; but, even

Digitized by Google

after such prolonged meditation, failed to get any really satisfactory light upon the subject.

With the disappearance of the snow, Miss Bentley and her bicycle had found their way to Rock Grange with most distressful regularity once more, and for three hours and a half every morning Molly was harried by the terrors of the multiplication table, the intricacies of English spelling, scales and five-finger exercises, together with "Bonnie Dundee" in its proper key, and all the other troublesome complications that go to the beginning of a little girl's education.

Hubert was away on a visit; there was no company in the house; her mother was more unwell than usual, keeping almost entirely to her own rooms; and Molly's only two pleasures at this particular time consisted in feeding her pet the ghost, and in looking forward to Christmas, which was only two weeks away.

Once she ventured to approach Miss Bentley on the subject of ghostly utterances, but was overcome by confusion at the outburst of unbelieving merriment with which her timid question was greeted.

"Ghosts—ghosts—did you say? Why, my dear precocious baby, there are no such things as haunting spirits in this wide-awake, practical

Digitized by Google

nineteenth century. Ghosts, indeed!" and Miss Bentley went into such uproarious merriment, that Molly was ready to burst into tears, being a sensitive little soul, with a wholesome horror of being ridiculed.

Miss Bentley, although a capital teacher, so far as mere instruction went, had no aptitude for reading a child's mind from a child's own standpoint, and in consequence totally failed to understand how her untimely mirth had hurt and even offended her pupil.

After this, Molly took care to avoid the very mention of anything supernatural, either in the presence of Miss Bentley, or of any other sceptical grown-up with whom she might be thrown in contact.

But she cherished her own belief on the subject more closely than before, and quite a motherly desire sprang to life in her bosom to comfort and cheer the poor lonely spook, who was doomed to wander through so many years of ghostly loneliness. Then she heard Ellen Samuel say that old Jake Frimpton was very ill, and not expected to recover. If he died, perhaps the haunting shade of her father's uncle would be able to go to his rest in Paradise; and, with this idea in her mind she determined to write a letter to the poor ghost,

Digitized by Google

and tell him of the happy prospect in store for him.

Mrs. Wills, who sat in the schoolroom with her in the evenings, now that Hubert was away, supposed the little girl to be busy over some exercises, set for her to do by Miss Bentley, and mentally she called that lady several hard names for giving out so much work to be done—though it is possible she would have recalled these strictures could she have looked over Molly's shoulder at that moment, and read the written page over which the child was bending so laboriously.

Spelling was Molly's weak point, and to meet the emergency she had armed herself with a very big dictionary, into which she dived for about every other word. Even then the results were not always all that could be desired: sometimes she could not find the word for which she sought, and occasionally she copied it wrongly when she did find it; whilst so heavy and constant were her sighs that Mrs. Wills, with indignation in her heart, resolved to acquaint her mistress with the way in which poor dear Miss Molly was being overworked in the evenings, when she should have been at play.

"Can I help you, dearie?" asked the kind-hearted housekeeper, when a heavier sigh than usual reached her ears.

Digitized by Google

"No, thank you, Mrs. Wills—not unless you could tell me how to spell 'tremendous.' The dictionary is so puzzling; I can find 'tree,' but there's no such word as 'tremendous' mentioned," Molly answered, looking up from her toil with flushed, eager face, and a broad ink-smudge on her dimpled chin.

Now Mrs. Wills was almost as weak orthographically as Molly herself, but she came valiantly to the rescue, good soul that she was, and between them they spelt the word—after a fashion.

Molly's labours were easier after this; every doubtful word could be submitted to the housekeeper, and what that good woman did not know she guessed at, and so between them the task got done, Molly signing her name at the bottom, with a feeling of proud satisfaction in her completed task. Her fingers and face were inky, the document on which she had been so laboriously engaged was also very much blotted, whilst there was quite a pool of ink on the table-cloth.

None of these drawbacks troubled Molly, however, as she locked her desk securely, and tucked away the key at the very bottom of her pocket.

The letter was Molly's first single-handed attempt at epistolary production, and, apart from the spelling, was quite a creditable performance.

Digitized by Google

"DEAR MR. GHOST,

"I thot you mite like to here that Jak Frimpton is dying, and so you will be able to go to hevven agen soon, to be an angle allwys.

"I shall not be able to bryng you foud to-morer" (Mrs. Wills spelt that word), "as I am goyng out with father, so I am putting a tree-mendus lot to-nite and a candel.

"I love you very much and I wish you coold tallk to me.

"MOLLY DE GREY."

This letter, written on three pages of an exercise book, was carefully made into a small parcel by Molly, who had no envelopes, and placed inside the bonbon box with all the food she could succeed in looting.

It had grown to be rather difficult to provision the box the last few evenings, for, owing to so many unaccountable disappearances, cook had taken to keeping so much food under lock and key, that Molly at last resolved on the bold stroke of asking for something nice to be made for her.

Accordingly, on the morning after her letter was written, she walked out to the kitchen, just after cook had received her orders for the day, and,

Digitized by Google

holding her head at a dignified angle, proceeded to make her request known.

"Cook, will you be so kind as to make me six mince pies, and cut me some nice meat sandwiches, and I should like them packed into a neat parcel, if you please?"

"Yes, Miss Molly, I'll be sure to do it; what time are they to be ready, and what sort of meat are the sandwiches to be made of?" cook said in a genial tone, never supposing but that Mrs. De Grey had sent the little girl into the kitchen with the order.

Molly hesitated; she was about to say, "I shall want them at dusk," but the servants were all so absurdly frightened at the mere mention of a ghost, that it would certainly never do to let a hint of her intentions lurk out here, so she said instead—

"I will come for them after luncheon, please, about half-past-two, I expect, because I am going to Charlesford in the pony-carriage this afternoon."

"Very well, miss; then perhaps you'd like the sandwiches to be nice big ones, ham or beef—something to bite at!"

"Yes, please, cook, that will do beautifully." And away skipped Molly, well satisfied by this stroke of business, which saved her from the necessity of a secret forage.

Digitized by Google

When she presented herself in the kitchen after luncheon, cook handed to her a neat parcel, carefully tied up in brown paper.

"There you are, Miss Molly; I've done them up beautifully."

"I am sure you have, cook, thank you very much!" cried Molly, taking the package and going off in great glee.

It just fitted into the bonbon box with the letter she had written on the previous evening laid on the top.

"I wonder if he is ever cold at night, poor ghost?" she murmured to herself as she tucked away the box in a secure hiding-place until the night should come; then ran downstairs to be ready for her drive into Charlesford with her father.

She was very silent during the drive, and Mr. De Grey seemed to be absorbed in meditation also, and that not of a very pleasant character either, judging by his lowering brow and heavy frown.

Molly did not venture to disturb him, though she would have been very thankful indeed to have been able to satisfy her puzzled little mind on the subject just then worrying her, as to whether ghosts, and supernatural things generally, felt the cold, or were in any way liable to bronchitis or other ills from which mortals suffered.

Digitized by Google

"From dusk to dawn they tramp the earth," Ellen Samuel had said; but all the questioning in the world could not make her able to state, with any degree of finality, what they did with themselves during the hours of daylight and sunshine, or whether they had aches and pains like other people.

It was in these mazes of speculation that Molly's thoughts were wandering during the drive to Charlesford, and back through the return journey also. And her silence was so extraordinary, that her father, absorbed though he was, found leisure to notice and comment upon it as they drove slowly up the steep hill to the entrance gate.

"You are a very quiet little Molly to-day; don't you feel well, child?"

"Yes, thank you, father; I've been thinking, that's all."

"Thinking! Dear me, what can you have to think about?" he asked with a laugh, which ended, however, in a sigh. He had so many thoughts himself in these dark winter days, and they were such sad thoughts too, while the burden of his secret trouble was ploughing furrows of care on his brow, and sprinkling threads of silver amongst his dark hair.

Digitized by Google

"I have a great number of things to think about, and some of them are very important too," Molly retorted, on the defensive now to maintain the solid character of her meditations.

Mr. De Grey laughed again, but he did not press the question further.

The early dusk was falling when they reached the house, and Molly rushed up to her own room to get her parcel and slip away with it to the lower terrace.

Ellen Samuel met her on the stairs. "Do you want me to take your things off, Miss Molly?" she asked.

"Not yet, thank you, Ellen: I have to go out again; but I shan't be long," Molly answered, hoping desperately that Ellen would not turn back into the bedroom just then.

"Very well, miss; if I'm not upstairs will you please ring, as I have to go down to Mrs. Wills's room," said Ellen, and then went on her way.

Molly pulled out her precious box from the wardrobe cupboard, where she had hidden it, dislodging in her haste a big, light-coloured rug which occasionally was thrown across her bed when she needed extra warmth.

"I'll take it, anyhow, and he needn't keep it if he doesn't want it," she said to herself as she labo-

Digitized by Google

riously rolled it into a bundle on the floor, and then tucked it under one arm, carrying the box very carefully under the other.

An odd little figure she looked as she trotted away upon her supposed mission of mercy; but no one saw her to wonder whither she was bound, and she reached the lower terrace in safety, though somewhat out of breath, for her double burden had proved a rather weighty affair.

As a matter of precaution she put both bundle and box under the seat, instead of upon it as usual; then, fearing lest the ghost should deem her guilty of neglect, she stayed to send a quavering little shout down into the gloom of the old quarry.

"You must please look under the seat for your supper, to-night, Mr. Ghost."

A moment more, and a shadow glided out from the other shadows below, and seemed to wave its hand to her.

"It's the ghost again," chuckled Molly, and then she trotted home.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCHOOLROOM-MAID'S HYSTERICS.

MOLLY departed in great state in the pony-carriage next morning, driven by a groom, and escorted by her mother's own maid, Ellen Samuel not being considered a sufficiently responsible person to look after the young lady on the railway journey, for Molly was going to Horford, from whence her father would fetch her on the following day.

It proved a most delightful visit; the lady with whom she stayed had three little girls, one of whom was exactly Molly's age, and the fun and the frolic were delightful beyond words.

But pleasure is a terribly fleeting joy; the bright hours passed like a flash almost, and then in due course Mr. De Grey appeared to take his small daughter home.

He was a little hurried in his manner, whilst the

Digitized by Google

gloom of his face was so marked that Molly's hostess asked if he was feeling unwell.

He smiled at this; only the pity was the smile faded so quickly, leaving his face stern as before.

"I am quite well, thank you; but there have been scenes at the Grange: our ancestral ghost has taken to walking again, and last night half the maids were in hysterics," he said, endeavouring to speak lightly, but succeeding only in being very grim indeed.

"Dear me, how very interesting!" exclaimed the lady. "A number of families own a ghost, but very few have the greater distinction of knowing it walks."

"It is a distinction I should prefer to have been spared. It is at least a dubious honour, as you would have said yourself had you heard the screaming last night," he retorted.

"You are having quite a Benjamin's portion of troubles at Rock Grange just now, Mr. De Grey. How is that damaged gamekeeper progressing?" the lady went on, in a tone of sincere commiseration.

"He is still alive, but not out of danger yet. It was on his account, indeed, that I came to Horford to-day. I had to see Dr. Basle, who kept me so long that I have only just about time to catch the

Digitized by Google

train," Mr. De Grey answered; and then Molly and he were whirled away to the station in a cab, and the pleasant visit was a thing of the past.

Molly's tongue wagged fast enough to-day, and she chattered without ceasing the whole way from Horford to Rock Grange, Mr. De Grey answering Yes or No as the occasion seemed to require, but always in an absent-minded fashion as if his thoughts were far away.

"It was cook who saw it, Miss Molly; and it was walking up and down as natural as life on the lower terrace, she said, and when she told us, I went off into hysterics so bad it took four people to hold me."

The speaker was Ellen Samuel, and she was removing Molly's outdoor garments in readiness for her to go and have tea with her mother.

"That was very silly, when you said yourself that ghosts were perfectly harmless," retorted Molly, in a tone of chilly superiority.

Ellen Samuel sniffed in aggrieved fashion. "It's nerves, Miss Molly, and one can't help having nerves—though they are like to cost me dear this time," and two great tears rolled from Ellen's eyes and splashed on to the boots she was unbuttoning.

"Why, Ellen, you are crying! Is that nerves too?" Molly asked, in anxious concern; she hated

Digitized by Google

to see any one in trouble, and the schoolroom-maid, despite the emptiness of her head, had a good heart, and was always kind to the child in her care.

"It is master, Miss Molly; he gave me notice to leave, last night, when I came out of my hysterics; he would have packed me off there and then, only mistress said it would be damaging to my character; but I've got to go at my month"—and, quite overcome, Ellen laid her head down on Molly's boots, and cried as hard as if another fit of hysterics were closely imminent.

Molly wept too, being very fond of Ellen; then a sudden bright idea occurring to her, she dried her tears, stuffed her handkerchief in her pocket, and declared that she would go at once to her father, and get him to take the notice back.

"Oh, Miss Molly, but I'm afraid he'll be angered with me for speaking to you," sighed Ellen; but she brightened up so much, at the chance of his yielding to the petition, that Molly went off in search of him at once, only just staying to run in and kiss her mother, who this evening was downstairs in the little drawing-room.

Mr. De Grey was in his study, with a big pile of letters and papers before him, which had come by the midday post. He looked up with a quick, annoyed movement at Molly's entrance.

Digitized by Google

"What do you want, child?"

"I don't want Ellen to be sent away," began Molly, stoutly, though her courage was fast oozing out at the tips of her fingers, or toes, or wherever courage does ooze out of little girls, who feel it going, though they may not see the place of its exit.

Mr. De Grey looked mildly astonished. Molly was not given to this sort of dictation, and so he could not understand it.

"I do not see what possible difference it can make to you when Ellen goes; you will have another maid to look after you. I am not proposing to deprive you of an attendant," he said, taking up another letter and breaking it open, as a hint to Molly to depart.

But she would not take it, the lines about her mouth setting in obstinate curves like her father's, for in mind and manner she was very much of a De Grey.

"I like Ellen, father; she is kinder to me than other maids have been. Eliza used to pinch me, and Dorcas would never come to me in the night, however tired and frightened I might be of the darkness. And she tells me stories too—nice creepy ones, that make me shiver?"

"I dare say she does," retorted Mr. De Grey,

Digitized by Google

grimly. "Stories of the ghosts and hobgoblins she has seen, or fancied she has seen."

"I have never heard anything about hobgoblins, I think," replied Molly, dubiously; "but I am rather fond of ghost stories. Will you let her stay, please, father?"

There was a wistful note in Molly's voice now, that somehow went straight to the heart of her father, though he gave no sign, only bent the closer over the letter he held open in his hand.

"I don't know. I will let you know later. I must think about it; now go, there's a good child," he said, with a wave of his hand, that was token of imperative dismissal.

"Thank you, father," replied Molly, turning to leave the room, taking care to shut the door quietly, that he might not be annoyed and so retract the half hope he had given her of letting Ellen stay.

Her mother was waiting tea for her in the little drawing-room, whither Molly now betook herself in quite hilarious spirits, entertaining Mrs. De Grey with an account of her doings at Horford, and beguiling the poor, sad lady into laughter more than once.

"Molly, I have a new story-book for you," Mrs. De Grey said later, as the little girl was about to return to the schoolroom.

Digitized by Google

"And may I read it to-night instead of doing lessons?" she asked, turning back to her mother's couch again.

"If you like; see, here it is, Molly—'The Spider's Two Wisdoms;' and the pictures are gorgeous indeed."

Molly took the book, being immediately entranced by the ferocious aspect of the big gilt spider on the cover; whilst the pages inside showed many another spider, small and large, disporting in crafty webs, standing on their heads, devouring each other piecemeal, and in various other ways displaying their nature and characteristics.

"Mother, what does it mean?" Molly asked dubiously, the book not being the mere story with pictures which she had first fancied it to be.

"It is a parable," replied Mrs. De Grey, smiling at the little girl's puzzled face.

"Is it out of the Bible?" she asked, the word to her mind being inseparably connected with Holy Writ.

"No; it is a parable from nature. There are a great many parables in nature, Molly, if only you can get your eyes open widely enough to see them," said her mother.

"I don't understand; won't you tell me what it means, mother sweet?" and the puzzled eyes were

Digitized by Google

lifted to Mrs. De Grey's face, as if to read the solution there.

Mrs. De Grey took the book in her own hands again; at the risk of keeping her husband waiting for dinner, she must smooth out the tangles of bewilderment in Molly's brain first.

The frontispiece was a realistic cobweb, stretched across a rosebush and glittering with dewdrops; but there was a great jagged rent across the web, and in the foreground a particularly fierce-looking spider was crouched, as if in profound meditation on the disaster.

"Look at this, Molly, and you will see the spider's first wisdom. He was just going hunting—had, in fact, already hung out his web to catch his breakfast—when some one—it might have been the gardener, or it might have been you, or a little girl like you—went to pick a rose, and tore that great hole in the web. The spider is looking very rueful over the accident, as indeed he well may, for he is very hungry. See how shrunken his body is; but now he is about to display his wisdom—his first wisdom—and he will mend his net before he attempts to coax an unwary fly into it, because he knows perfectly well that the fly could break away if the net or web were not perfect in every part."

"Oh, mother, it is lovely!" cried Molly, in a

Digitized by Google

tone of delight, as Mrs. De Grey paused to turn over the pages until she came to another picture: the same web, the same spider, only instead of being crouched in dismal contemplation of the ruin wrought in his breakfast-catcher, he was now in the very centre of the web, drawing the broken strands together, and binding them fast by a method of his own.

"That is the second wisdom, Molly; he is mending his web by beginning in the middle."

"Yes?" uttered the little girl in a tone of query, failing to see any point in this action of the spider.

"That is the parable, Molly," went on her mother, in the serious tone of one who tries to drive a lesson home; "it is meant for men and women who have done wrong things, or whose lives by disaster have gone awry; and it is meant for children too."

"I don't understand," said Molly, with a troubled look, as if in deprecation of her own density.

"When a man, woman, or child, Molly, has been living a wrong life, but wants to mend it and do better in future, the only effectual way to set about it is to begin in the middle, that is at the heart, and to make sure that it is clean, humble, and filled with the fear of God; then afterwards this rightness of heart will spread outwards into

Digitized by Google

righteousness of life, but, like the spider's web, with all the strength in the middle."

"I see," retorted Molly, with a wise nod of her head. "But that's the second picture, mother; what does the first one teach?"

"Just this: you cannot expect to influence other people for good, or to have any power over them to restrain them from evil, unless the web of your own life and character is free from jags and tears, unsightly rents that spoil the whole. Quite a little sermon, is it not? Now run away, dearie, or I shall be late and father will be kept waiting," Mrs. De Grey said, with a loving good-night kiss.

Molly departed with a fleet foot; she was remembering a duty that had momentarily slipped from her mind.

First, she rushed into the schoolroom to leave the spider book in safety there, then upstairs she sped two steps at a time to fetch from her own room a bulky parcel of bread and meat, which she had bought with her own money in Horford, and was now going to take down to the terrace, as supper for her pet the ghost.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

DIVERS SHOCKS AND SURPRISES.

THINGS were coming to a pretty pass in Framstock. Women were afraid to go outside their houses, after the early winter dusk had fallen; children refused to go on errands in broad daylight unless they were permitted to go in bands of half a dozen strong; whilst even grown men, who ought to have known better, but didn't, declared that they would rather go five miles some other way, than pass the church gate at night. And why?

No one could answer definitely on the subject, though most people had some fearsome tale to tell of a figure draped in white, that sprang over the churchyard wall at night—one said it jumped over the church too, but that might have been an exaggeration—and running swiftly through the village street, disappeared in the old quarry below Rock Grange.

Digitized by Google

The scare among the villagers was proving disastrous for trade, the man at the general shop declaring that it was of no use for him to keep open after five o'clock in the afternoon, because his customers were afraid to venture over their doorsteps after dark had fallen. The man at the public-house complained even louder, for the men of the village, having a dread of encountering the spook, would not come to fetch their supper beer, turning into teetotalers by the dozen; whilst the constable walked about with his eyes shut, or hid in a sheltered barn or behind a hayrick, through fear of seeing the ghost of poor Geoffrey De Grey careering about in uneasy despair.

There was no poaching now in the preserves of Mr. De Grey—indeed, saving for appearances, the keepers might have gone to bed like other people, for the poachers, having unquiet consciences, were more afraid than anyone else.

The reasons given for this unusual activity on the part of the ghost were many and various, but the two to which the most credence was given were first, that the restless shade had been disturbed by the late poaching fray in the quarry wood, where Biles had received his hurt; and, second, that the illness unto death of old Jake Frimpton had caused the spirit to come and hover about the

Digitized by Google

bed of the man who had sent him untimely out of life.

No murmur of all this fright and agitation, however, penetrated to the ears of Mr. and Mrs. De Grey, and even Molly heard nothing about it, the servants hushing their voices when she appeared, whilst Hubert was still away; and Ellen Samuel, forgiven for the time being, so much on her good behaviour, that she hardly talked at all, the golden rule of silence seeming safest for her unsteady steps just now.

But Mr. Farleigh, the vicar, heard the rumours, and night after night he watched from the vicarage windows for some sign of the presence said to pervade the churchyard.

He did see something one night, or thought he did, and going quietly out of the house stepped over the low hedge of his garden into the plot of ground surrounding the De Grey mausoleum, and striding forward caught hold of a figure crouching there.

A howl for mercy, that was in reality a yell of pure fright, so surprised the vicar that for a moment he almost loosed his hold. He had thought to catch the reputed ghost, whilst the man whom he had caught supposed that the ghost had caught him.

Digitized by Google

It took a minute or two to re-adjust first impressions, and then the vicar began to laugh, though the man whom he had caught trembled still, and quivered like a convicted thief.

He was a policeman from Charlesford, who, being ambitious to rise in his profession, had taken to haunting Framstock of late, dressed in plain clothes, having for his object the detection of the poacher who had wounded the gamekeeper Biles, and the ultimate earning of the reward offered by Mr. De Grey.

Hearing the absurd stories rife in the village concerning the ghost that had been seen to jump the churchyard wall—or the church—this policeman had hit upon the bright idea that probably the poacher whom they sought might be identical with the ghost. So he had hung about the churchyard at night, sowing the seeds in his constitution of a plentiful crop of rheumatism later on, yet never seeing anything until the previous night, when, just as he was entering by the small gate from the high road, he espied a figure in a long swathing garment of a lightish hue, disappear round the corner of the De Grey mausoleum, as if it had just emerged from the tomb.

To this he promptly gave chase, but lost it at the back of Jake Frimpton's miserable hovel. And

Digitized by Google

he had returned to-night to follow up his clue—only to find himself the captured, instead of the captor.

Mr. Farleigh took him into the vicarage and gave him some supper, sending him home with a half-crown in his pocket that had not been there when he came.

But the vicar himself remained plunged in gloomy reverie long after the valorous constable had departed.

That some mystery lay underneath these reputed appearances, he felt certain, and now since the story told him by the policeman, a suspicion had grown up in the good vicar's mind that made him almost as uncomfortable as it would have made Mrs. De Grey, had the rumour chanced to reach her ears.

"Poor fellow, poor misguided fellow, suppose it should indeed be he?" said the perturbed clergyman, getting up to pace the room uneasily to and fro. Then putting on his hat and coat he went out to the churchyard once more, lingering about in the damp and the darkness until the footsteps of the carters going to fed their horses at four o'clock in the morning drove him into the house again, by reminding him that the matter-of-fact, everyday world was waking up once more.

Molly fed the ghost night by night with unfailing

Digitized by Google

regularity; and when that gorgeous picture-book "The Spider's Two Wisdoms," had been read, and re-read, it occurred to her that perhaps the ghost might like to see it too. With Molly, to think was to act, and accordingly that same evening the treasured book was wrapped up in a good many thicknesses of brown paper, and being tied, with an alarming number of knots, to the top of the bonbon box, was taken by her down to the lower terrace, and there left for that poor distressed shade, who had so strangely come to be dependent on her kindness.

It cost something to leave her beautiful book out there in the dark, with the uncertainty too of ever getting it back again. But if the poor ghost had nothing to read, it must certainly be very dull in these long evenings, so she packed up another candle and an extra box of matches, and hoped in her warm little heart that the book would bring him as much pleasure as it had brought to her.

Cook complained once or twice of the unaccountable disappearance of bread and meat, cakes, butter, and pastry from the larder, and the delinquent was supposed to be Nan, the brown-and-white spaniel, who had the freedom of the kitchen, and was, in a way, a very clever dog indeed.

So many transgressions had Nan committed,

Digitized by Google

which had gone undiscovered, that it was not so serious a matter, after all, for her to have laid to her charge a fault of which for once she was not guilty.

Not that any one thought of punishing her for the supposed theft—far from it, the kitchen contingent were loud in their praise of the dog's cleverness in having evaded detection.

If Molly had heard of the matter, and known that the brown-and-white spaniel was being thus falsely accused, she would at once have owned to being the culprit. As it was, she took the food she could find day after day, with never a thought of wrong-doing, or a doubt as to her perfect right to do it.

She had just come in from the lower terrace one evening, and was sitting on a low stool by the schoolroom fire, warming her hands, and wishing vaguely that she could bring her poor friend the ghost out from the cold and damp of the old quarry into the warmth and brightness of the house, when suddenly a piercing scream rang through the quiet of the place, followed by a perfect chorus of yells, together with loud talking and many exclamations.

Molly ran to the door, and was rushing along the passage towards the servants' part of the house, whence came the sounds of commotion, when she

Digitized by Google

tumbled into the arms of Mrs. Wills, who was hurrying in the direction of the schoolroom.

"What is the matter, Mrs. Wills? Is the house on fire, or any one hurt?" panted the little girl, hiding her face against the capacious bosom of the housekeeper.

"I think cook is hurt—in her head," replied Mrs. Wills, in no pleased tone, "for she has seen fit to go into strong hysterics, and there is company to dinner to-night. Was there ever anything so vexatious? I suppose I shall have to go into the kitchen and see to things myself. But, my dear, where is Ellen?" and having by this time reached the schoolroom, and found Ellen missing, the good woman was about to pull the bell with considerable energy.

"She has gone to mother's dressing-room for my paint-box; I left it there this afternoon. Will you want her to help you with the dinner?" Molly inquired a little anxiously, for it was lonely sitting in the schoolroom in solitary state.

"No, Miss Molly; and I wouldn't have her if I did, seeing that it would leave you alone."

"Will cook be better soon?" Molly asked, as Mrs. Wills poked the fire into a bright blaze, and seemed to resent still the momentary absence of the schoolroom-maid.

Digitized by Google

"The silly thing! I hope so; I have no patience with her. Nerves indeed! When I was young, servants were not supposed to have nerves—only ladies who had money and leisure for the indulgence," snapped the housekeeper in a tone of exasperation; then, hearing Ellen approaching, she bustled from the room, meeting the maid in the dooway, and laying some stern—but to Molly inaudible—injunction upon her as she passed, departed to the kitchen regions, to rescue the dinner from disaster.

Ellen came in, teeth chattering, face as white as chalk, and Molly noticed that she staggered as she walked.

"Are you poorly too, Ellen?" demanded the little girl, wondering what would happen to herself if the schoolroom-maid were to fall into a fit of hysterics, such as cook was at this moment indulging in, in the kitchen.

"It's the air, miss; it does seem uncommon close to-night," panted Ellen, throwing up her head, and drawing a deep breath, as if the atmosphere was really oppressive, although, as a keen north-east wind was blowing at the time, the excuse did not sound very natural.

"Would you like a glass of water, or will you sit in this easy chair, and let me fan you?" queried

Digitized by Google

Molly, anxiously, being quite certain that her courage was not equal to hysterics, and feeling sure that she should run away if Ellen showed signs of the commencement of an attack.

"No, thank you, Miss Molly; I'm better now. I wonder what Mrs. Wills would say if she should chance to happen along, and see me spread out in an easy chair, with you working at me with a fan and a glass of water," said Ellen, grimly, "I expect the fan would go into the fire and the glass of water into my face, before you had time to count three."

"Are ghosts ever sick? and who nurses them when they are not well?" asked Molly, returning to her seat by the fire, and taking up the thread of her meditation where she had dropped it.

"Lawk-a-mercy, Miss Molly; how you do make my flesh creep!" cried Ellen, who burst forthwith into a fit of weeping.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

IN SIGHT OF THE END.

IT wanted only two days to Christmas, and Hubert was at home again.

The weather, which for weeks past had been mild and damp, had turned colder, and threatened snow. An old-fashioned Christmas, people said it would be—a prophecy which Molly hailed with delight, since a snow-covered earth meant tobogganing, and tobogganing was the pastime in which of all others she revelled.

There were to be great doings in the village, Framstock village, this Christmas. On Christmas Eve, all the old women were to be regaled with a tea in the National schoolroom, at the expense of Mrs. De Grey; whilst on the day after Christmas, the old men were to be likewise entertained by Mr. De Grey—both festivities being in honour of the recovery of Biles, who at last had been declared

Digitized by Google

by the doctors to be really on the road to convalescence.

Molly was in a perfect whirl of activity. She was here, she was there, planning this, and arranging that; making impossible pink-paper roses to decorate the schoolroom, for the double function of tea-drinking-thanksgiving, tying up bunches of evergreens for the same purpose, but tying them, alas, with such insecure string, that they would be physically certain to fall to bits, five minutes after being fixed in position.

Hubert was busy too, but in a very different fashion, and he turned up his nose in scorn at the pink-paper roses, and the queer-looking bunches of green, that Molly had so painstakingly prepared with a view to the adorning of the schoolroom. He preferred to be out and about, with Nan at his heels, throwing out suggestions to the gardener, or giving orders to the gamekeepers—to which they listened with due deference in his presence, but laughed at when his back was turned.

Molly's pink roses packed into one hamper, and the evergreens into another, were put into the carriage in company with herself and Ellen, and driven off in solemn state to the village, where, with the assistance of some half a score of volunteers, they—the contents of the hampers—were fixed in

Digitized by Google

more or less artistic grace about the dingy National schoolroom, to the satisfaction of all concerned; though the old ladies did certainly complain of having more bits of holly and ivy in their cups of tea than was altogether agreeable, whilst whole avalanches of pink paper tumbled on to the heads of the old men, when their turn came to be regaled with tea and cake, and the other items of feasting.

"Poor old Jake Frimpton died yesterday, Miss Molly; the bell went out for him at eight o'clock this morning, and he's to be buried on Christmas Day."

"Poor old man. Will father's uncle go back to Paradise now?" asked Molly, eagerly, turning to look at Ellen, who was her informant, with considerable anxiety in her eyes.

They were in the carriage again, going slowly up the long steep hill to the Grange, and Ellen hesitated a little before replying, her words even then not being a reply to Molly's question.

"I am not to talk to you of ghosts and such things, Miss Molly," she answered primly, though it was very evident from the expression of her face that she was just aching to tell out all she knew, or thought she knew, upon the subject.

"But Ellen, I do so badly want to know; I have very serious reasons for asking; so, indeed, you

Digitized by Google

must tell me," she said, with that touch of dictatorial peremptoriness which made her so like her father.

"If you put it like that, Miss Molly, I suppose I shall have to tell you," retorted Ellen, briskly, glad of the chance to free her mind without having to bear the responsibility of it. "The ghost will be at rest now, poor thing—if it ever can rest, that is. But some say it will be lingering about till the funeral, and then when the grave closes over Jake Frimpton, poor Mr. Geoffrey De Grey will become an angel for ever."

"Aren't ghosts and angels just the same?" demanded Molly, with a puzzled expression.

"I suppose not. I don't suppose they could be anyhow; but there, it just makes me creep to think about it all," Ellen said, with a strong shudder that made her teeth chatter.

"Was Jake Frimpton very old?" asked Molly, as the carriage turned round the last bend in the hilly road, and the horses quickened their pace for the bit of level drive within the gates of the Grange.

"Turned ninety, so they say; and Mr. Farleigh who visited him constantly all the time he was bad, says he was most penitent for all the sins of his wicked life—as indeed he had plenty of time to be, living so long. Well, he is dead now, and we

Digitized by Google

don't speak ill of the dead; but it did seem a shame about poor Mr. Geoffrey De Grey."

Molly's eyes were full of tears, though she turned her head away that Ellen might not see them. She was thinking how she would miss her friend the ghost, and how lonely the old quarry would be without his queer, haunting presence.

"You'll not tell Mrs. Wills I've said aught to you of ghosts, Miss Molly?" pleaded Ellen, as they reached the house. "She would be fit to box my ears if she knew, for she can be violent at times, for all she's not hard to live under as a whole."

"No, Ellen; I won't tell her," retorted Molly in reassuring tones, and then she hurried to get her things off, having decided to write a farewell note to the ghost, that the poor thing might have a kind word to take with him, away from the earth where he had been treated so cruelly.

But, owing to hindrances, the letter did not get finished until the next day, which was Christmas eve, and in it Molly was careful to ask the departing spook if he would please to leave her picture-book behind, when he started on his heavenward journey, as Hubert had already asked to see it, and was impatient at its not being forthcoming.

Such a boxful of dainties she carried down to the

Digitized by Google

terrace that night, as a farewell feast for the flitting shade: candied fruits, macaroons, cold sausages, mincepies, pink candles from her Christmas tree, a sugar mouse, half a cold fowl, and a bunch of grapes—the whole of these articles being tumbled in together; the pink candles and the sausages lying side by side at the bottom of the box, with the other things on the top.

It was rather a heavy load, and she was considerably out of breath by the time she reached the top of the steps leading down to the quarry, which to-night looked even darker and more lonely than before.

When she had regained her breath a little, she went to lean over the wall at the edge of the steep quarry-side.

"Mr. Ghost, dear Mr. Ghost," she cried, "I hope you will get safely back to Paradise to-morrow; I shall miss you very much; good-bye."

Her voice broke in a catching sob over the last word, and she fled along the terrace path, and up the steps to the next level as fast as she could run.

Hubert was at the side door when she reached it; he was issuing a final order of some sort to an under-keeper, whilst the brown-and-white spaniel Nan stood beside him, one hand of his resting on her head, whilst her nose lay lovingly against his

Digitized by Google

jacket, for Nan was a loyal beast, and loved her young master without stint or measure.

"Molly, what have you been doing, rushing round the grounds in the dark?" began Hubert in peremptory wise, dismissing the keeper with a wave of his hand, and turning sharply upon Molly.

"I have been down to the lower terrace," she said with a half note of defiance in her tone, not admitting his right to question her, or pry into her private business.

"The lower terrace is no fit place for you after dark, especially now it has such a bad name; don't go there again, or I shall tell mother," he said in a severe tone.

"Very well," she answered drearily, thinking it did not matter either way now, since old Jake Frimpton was dead, and beyond any vengeance Hubert might be disposed to wreak upon him, whilst even the ghost was going back to heaven to-morrow.

"I think it's going to be a jolly Christmas, don't you?" said Hubert, a few minutes later, as they went indoors together, in order to get ready to put in an appearance at the old women's tea-party.

"No, I don't," cried Molly, passionately, all her hardly-repressed misery breaking forth in vehement weeping. "Uncle Eric was here last year, and we

Digitized by Google

were *so* happy; but this year we don't even know where he is."

"He's in London," asserted Hubert, more from a desire to console his sobbing sister than from any especial certainty as to his uncle's whereabouts.

"No, he isn't. I asked mother yesterday, and she said that father had not heard from Uncle Eric for months, and had no idea where he was," wailed Molly, with an air of deep affliction.

"Oh, he'll be all right; very likely he's having no end of a jolly time somewhere, in Paris, or Rome, perhaps, or he may even have gone to Vienna, for Uncle Eric knows his way about," retorted Hubert, wagging his head wisely.

"I don't think he's gone to those places," Molly said sadly. "It takes a lot of money, you know; and I don't think Uncle Eric had much to spend. I heard father tell mother one day that he was in the hands of the Jews, and I'm so afraid they'll stone him." Here Molly broke down in a fresh burst of weeping; but Hubert for the present was too much astonished to attempt any sort of consolation.

"Stone him? What do you mean?—he isn't a raisin!"

Molly beat the air with her hands, laughter at

Digitized by Google

Hubert's non-comprehension mingling with the tears she was shedding for her uncle.

"No, no; how can you be so foolish—I mean the vicar's text last Sunday morning, about the Jews stoning Stephen," she gasped, when between laughing and crying she had recovered breath enough to speak again.

"Oh!" exclaimed Hubert, with a long-drawn inspiration. "What a goose you are, to be sure, Molly! When a gentleman like Uncle Eric gets into the hands of the Jews, they don't stone him, but just drain him dry."

"It is nearly the same, though, isn't it?" asked Molly, with a sniff that betokened more tears close at hand.

"No, no; to stone a person means to kill him, or pretty nearly; but to drain him dry means only to take his money away."

"Is that all? Why, father could easily give him more—he's got such a lot;" and Molly's smiles broke forth ere ever the tears on her cheeks were dry.

"I'm not so sure about father being able to give him some more money. He has paid Uncle Eric's debts twice already; and he has got me to think about too," protested Hubert, in a grumbling tone.

"You?" Molly's eyes were round with wonder

Digitized by Google

as she put the question; to her limited understanding it seemed impossible that Hubert could have any connection with her father's inability to keep the spendthrift uncle's pockets filled with money.

"Why, yes, I'm the heir; and father has no right to impoverish the estate—to take my money, in fact—to set Uncle Eric on his legs again."

"It isn't your money—it's father's," objected Molly, with a frown. She had her hand on the handle of her bedroom door as she spoke, the two having come upstairs as they talked.

"It will be mine some day," corrected the boy, trying to hold up his head with a lordly air, but only succeeding in looking sheepish.

Molly gazed at him for a moment in silence; then, as she pulled open the door and prepared to disappear within, she said slowly—

"You are a very selfish boy!"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

MOLLY'S CONFESSION.

CHRISTMAS DAY dawned clear and frosty, with a coating of ice on the ponds that gave promise of skating later on.

Molly came to Framstock Church in the morning with her father, mother, and Hubert. But, Christmas though it was, her face was very grave and troubled, whilst during the sermon she had to blink very hard to keep the tears from falling.

"How solemn you look, Miss Molly! Did Santa Claus forget to give you a call last night?" asked the vicar, when the service was over, and he had taken his surplice off, and come to speak to the De Greys at the door of the carriage, before they drove back up the hill to the Grange.

"No; he never forgets me, thank you," she said with a little shake of her head; but there was no

Digitized by Google

smile on her face, and her lip quivered as she spoke.

"We shall see you at dinner to-night, Mr. Farleigh?" asked Mrs. De Grey as the carriage began to move.

"If I can, I will come; but I am very full of work to-day," he answered with a smile. "Another service this afternoon, a funeral after it, and several sick folk to see; but I will do my best to get to the Grange." The vicar drew back as he spoke, for the horses were prancing and dancing at such a rate it did not seem safe to stand there any longer.

Molly was labouring under a very heavy disappointment that morning. Getting up directly daylight broke, she had run down to the lower terrace, the first thing after leaving her bedroom, in order to get that treasured picture-book which she had asked her friend the ghost to restore before he went back to heaven.

But alas for her expectations! The picture-book was not there, the bonbon box was not there either, and, quite overcome, Molly had sat down in the drear cold light of the Christmas morning to weep bitter tears over the ingratitude of the ghost.

This untoward event had altogether taken the flavour out of her happiness. Her stockingful of presents failed to give her joy, Hubert's boisterous

Digitized by Google

greeting hardly got a response, and she was so sad and absorbed all breakfast-time, that Mrs. De Grey feared she was going to be ill.

Both children were to dine late that evening, and after lunch they took the dogs and went for a run on the Charlesford Road, returning warm and cosy just as the afternoon began to close in grey and cold.

"Now, Molly, turn out that picture-book of yours —I want to see it," said Hubert, in his dictatorial style, as he stretched himself at full length on the soft rug before the little drawing-room fire.

"Which picture-book?" asked Molly, in a frightened tone, her face flushing red as a peony.

"Why, 'The Spider's Two Wisdoms,' of course. You know how badly I've wanted to see it; and you promised to show it me to-day."

"I—I haven't got it," faltered Molly, in a tone of keen distress.

"Oh, Molly, I did not want you to give that book away, dear," said her mother, who was resting on the couch.

"I didn't mean to give it—I only lent it; and now I can't get it back again, because the—the person has gone to heaven to-day," replied Molly, breaking down and crying dismally, creeping close to her mother's couch in order to gain comfort and courage from the contact.

Digitized by Google

"Tell me about it, dear," adjured Mrs. De Grey, slipping a reassuring arm about the sobbing child, and nodding to Hubert to leave them alone for a little time.

He arose at once, looking decidedly puzzled. Molly had been very much of an enigma to him ever since his return home; but to-day she had been absolutely "queer, duffing, and sulky," according to his vocabulary.

But if she was in trouble, that made a difference; and he made haste to escape and leave her with his mother, having the true boy's horror of any scene that included tears and agitation.

For a time Molly sobbed with quite desperate energy, and Mrs. De Grey left her to cry unchecked, feeling that she would talk all the easier if allowed to get rid of this stormy emotion first.

"I wrote him a letter to ask him not to take it with him when he went back to heaven," she gasped, half incoherently, when, having wet her own handkerchief and her mother's through and through with her tears, she began to feel a little better, and able to talk once more.

"To whom did you write, dear?" queried Mrs. De Grey, more puzzled than ever.

"To the ghost—father's poor uncle Geoffrey, you know," replied Molly, whilst her mother looked

Digitized by Google

more surprised than ever, as indeed she well might.

"I don't understand," she said vaguely.

"You know the poor ghost that haunts the lower terrace, and the old quarry, mother; he couldn't go back to Paradise, you know, whilst Jake Frimpton was alive, and so I lent him my picture-book to amuse him, and now he has just gone and taken it with him," and Molly put down her head and sobbed again from sheer bitterness of heart.

"People don't take picture-books to Paradise," said Mrs. De Grey, quite shocked to find how much of a heathen after all her little daughter was.

"What can he have done with it, then?" queried Molly, holding up her head to look at her mother in surprise.

"Suppose you begin at the beginning, and tell me all about it," suggested the lady, feeling that she was altogether in the dark concerning Molly's trouble, and the reason for it.

The whole story came out then, of how she had heard a groan from the quarry, and had seen the ghost move to and fro; how she had pitied it, and raided the larder on its behalf; had carried it a rug to keep it warm, candles and matches as a solace to its lonely, uncomfortable existence; written letters to it, and finally trusted to its keep-

Digitized by Google

ing the precious picture-book, which, despite her request, it had not seen fit to return.

"Molly, Molly, whatever possessed you to do all this?" cried Mrs. De Grey, starting up on the couch, with her face very white, but her eyes shining brightly as if with some new hope.

"It must have been hungry, mother, I'm sure it must, because it always ate the things; and they were quite plain things mostly, mother dear, and not expensive at all," pleaded Molly, wistfully, as if fearing lest her mother should consider the outlay to have been in any way excessive.

"Molly," said Mrs. De Grey, gravely, "I think that this story of yours wants some consideration, and until I have thought it out and can explain to you about this ghost which you have seen and fed, it will be better for you to say nothing about it."

"Very well, mother; but shall I get the book again, do you expect?" she asked, inclined to regret now what she considered her misplaced benevolence in lending it at all.

"If you do not, I will give you another; but I must write a letter now, dearie, so run away and leave me until tea is brought in," Mrs. De Grey said, rising with evident haste, and going to her writing-table, where she sat down and commenced to write rapidly.

Digitized by Google

Molly went out of the room, feeling that she had rolled a big load of responsibility from her own shoulders on to those of her mother, who, being wiser, would have more skill in adjusting the burden.

Hubert had wandered off to the schoolroom, where he was busy among the big pile of presents received that morning.

"Hullo; feel better?" he asked, touched by the exceeding redness of Molly's nose and eyes.

"Yes, thank you," she answered, drawing a long breath of relief.

"Where did the book go to?" he asked, the little outburst of sympathy dying away before the truly boyish desire to tease.

"Mother knows," retorted Molly, cheerfully, smiling now, as if no such things as trouble and tears existed; and not another word on the subject could Hubert draw from her, however adroitly he tried to entrap her into some involuntary admission.

Meanwhile Mrs. De Grey had written her letter, and despatched it by a footman to the vicarage, with instructions that he was to wait for an answer.

The vicar was not in when the messenger reached Framstock Vicarage, as directly the funeral of old Jake Frimpton was over he had hurried

Digitized by Google

away to a cottage on the outskirts of the parish, where another of his parishioners lay dying.

When he did return, it was to find not only Mrs. De Grey's letter marked "Immediate" awaiting him, but also that valorous constable from Charlesford whom he had once encountered at night in the churchyard.

The constable said his business was very urgent, and couldn't wait another minute; but the vicar replied quietly that Mrs. De Grey's communication must have his attention first, and passed into his study with the letter in his hand, where he locked the door before breaking the seal.

"I am filled with the liveliest apprehensions," ran the letter. "Molly has for weeks past been feeding some one who is hidden in the old quarry, and whom she thinks is the ghost of Geoffrey De Grey. Do you think this can be the one for whom we are searching so anxiously? If so, could you find him out, and bring him into the house quietly after dark, taking him straight to my husband's study. I think his heart is softened a little towards the prodigal now, and if we can keep the affair from becoming an open scandal, by falling into the hands of the police, a very great deal will have been gained."

There was more in the letter, but Mr. Farleigh

Digitized by Google

hardly gathered the sense of the concluding paragraphs, even though his eyes glanced over them; he was thinking of that man who sat waiting in the next room with his plea of urgent business, and he wondered, with a shiver, what that business might be.

There was no time to lose, evidently, but before he could act he must discover the nature of the errand which had brought the constable over from Charlesford at this unusual hour, and on Christmas Day too.

Ringing the bell, he told his servant to show the man in; but before the order could be obeyed he thrust the letter sent by Mrs. De Grey into an inner pocket, as if fearful lest the sharp eyes of the policeman should pry into the nature of the communication, unless it was hidden away.

"I'm sorry to trouble you to-night, sir, but I've got a clue at last, and I've come for your help in following it up," said the constable, mopping his face with a very big red handkerchief, as if he found the weather oppressively sultry.

"I am not a detective," said Mr. Farleigh, mildly.

"No, sir, no; of course not; but there's not another man within the parish boundary that I can ask to help me, so I'm bound to come to you," retorted the constable, rather red and confused, for

Digitized by Google

the vicar's manner was not especially encouraging just then.

"What is your clue?"

"The man, whoever he is, that shot the gamekeeper Biles, is in hiding somewhere about the grounds at Rock Grange; and what is more, I'm inclined to believe he is fed from the house, or he must have been starved out long ago. And it is my opinion, sir, that he and the ghost are the same party."

"Indeed! You didn't seem to think so that night I came on you unexpectedly by the door of the De Grey mausoleum," replied the vicar, with a quiet smile.

The constable flushed. "I'll own I was a bit scared for the minute, sir. But I put it to you as a clergyman: you don't think that creature which the village-folk talk about with bated breath, is a spirit, do you, sir—a spirit unclothed of its mortal flesh?"

"No," said the vicar, slowly, "I do not. But have you any proof that they have seen anything at all—not merely imagined it?"

"I've seen a figure myself in the distance, and tracked it into the grounds at Rock Grange; but I can't go in there after it myself, sir, without a permit from Mr. De Grey. He can be a queer

Digitized by Google

gentleman when he likes, and he might tell me I was exceeding my duty. Can you get permission, sir?"

The question showed the perplexed vicar a way of escape, and he grasped it eagerly.

"Perhaps I can; at least I can ask for it. I am going to the Grange now; if you like to wait here and take some supper with my servants, I will send a message to you in about an hour's time."

"Thank you, sir, I'm truly obliged," replied the constable, who was well pleased with the result of the interview.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

THE WISDOM OF THE SPIDER.

MR. FARLEIGH walked down the village street with a hasty step, and a heart that beat the faster because of the uncertain issues of the errand on which he was bent.

Leaving the main road directly he had crossed the river bridge, he turned into a bridle-track, solitary and little used, which led up past the old quarry to the Stoneden woods, where the game-keeper Biles had received his hurt.

Half an hour of brisk walking—indeed so good was the pace he made that it might have been less—and he found himself in the old quarry. It was very dark here in the shadow, although out in the open a young moon was doing its best to lighten up the Christmas night.

The vicar hesitated, a very natural fear staying

Digitized by Google

his steps. The fugitive he had come to seek was probably armed, and might shoot, in supposed self-defence, if he heard an approaching footstep.

But the vicar lived the faith he preached, and, standing still, lifted his heart heavenwards, supplicating the Divine guidance for his next movement. Nor had he long to wait for an answer.

The night wind moaned through the deserted hollow, an owl hooted plaintively in the Stoneden woods, and then, close at hand, sounded a hollow cough—the cough of a suffering man, followed by the words, uttered in a tone of mournful despair, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

"Amen," responded the vicar, fervently, lifting his hat with a hasty hand; then he called out briskly—

"Eric, my boy, no man ever yet prayed that prayer in vain, if he prayed it in truth and sincerity."

There was a moment of strained silence, in which the wind sighed again, and the owl hooted yet more sadly than before; then the voice the vicar had been longing to hear spoke almost at his side—

"Mr. Farleigh, is it you?"

"Yes, yes," he answered hurriedly; "but, Eric where are you?"

Digitized by Google

Another pause, broken by a second fit of coughing, then a slow heavy step close beside him, and a hand dropped upon his arm with a hesitating touch, as if its owner were even now uncertain of the greeting he might meet from the old-time friend who had sought him out in his hiding and shame.

"Is old Biles dead?" asked the poor fellow, his voice broken by the terrible, racking cough.

"No, no; he is getting better. But, Eric, why did you not come to me? Surely you could have trusted me?" the vicar said in a reproachful tone, for he had loved this young man almost as if the prodigal had been his own son.

"I tried—night after night I have haunted the churchyard hoping to get a chance to make myself known; but in the end I found I was watched, and once I was nearly caught."

"Yes, yes, I know, and at this moment the man who has been tracking you down is at the vicarage, taking supper with my servants, and waiting for permission to search this quarry."

"Let him come; as well end it now as later, and since I'm not a murderer, it doesn't so much matter," retorted the young man, recklessly.

"Eric, why did you do it?" asked the vicar in a tone of pain.

"Robert was hard on me, cruelly hard, when I

Digitized by Google

got into that muddle last spring. He not merely wouldn't help me out of it, but he stopped my allowance," answered the other, doggedly.

"What have you lived on?" demanded the vicar, thinking privately that it was little wonder Eric De Grey had fallen into the way of transgressors, if that was the sort of brotherly love and compassion meted out to him by Mr. De Grey, who, serene in place and power, and proud of the integrity of his own upright life, had forgotten to be generous, long-suffering, and kind.

"On my wits mostly; there hasn't been much else, you know. Then I took to poaching to spite Robert; but I never meant to shoot old Biles. I rushed at him with my gun, meaning to knock him down, and forgetting it was loaded, when it caught against the branch of a tree, and went off. I was frightened then, threw away the gun and bolted; but I couldn't run far, for I had hurt my foot, and so took refuge here. I meant to kill myself the next night, for I had nothing to eat, and slow starvation is not a comfortable sort of death. But just as I was sitting out on a stone there, nerving my courage for the attempt, I heard a little voice that could only belong to Molly, calling out, 'I have put some supper on the seat at the top of the steps for you, Mr. Ghost.' That made me think

Digitized by Google

I'd put off what I was thinking of, for one more night at least; but the child has fed me ever since, and the temptation towards self-destruction has been removed from me until now."

"Why now?"

"The child thinks I am the ghost of poor Uncle Geoff—a very hungry ghost by the way—but now that Jake Frimpton is dead and buried she thinks I shall go back to Paradise. Ah me, if I were sure of getting there, Mr. Farleigh, I'd start to-night."

"So you shall, Eric, my boy; but the first stage of the journey lies up to the Grange. I had a letter from Mrs. De Grey this evening, saying that she would leave the library window nearest the terraces unbolted for us, and so, for once, we will enter in a burglarious fashion; but we must make haste, or that enterprising constable will be here before we are safely away."

"I must take Molly's book," replied Eric, diving back into some remote corner in the darkness of the little cave that had been his home for so many weeks.

"What book?" asked the vicar, who did not know all the story yet.

"The funniest picture-book you ever saw; it is called 'The Spider's Two Wisdoms.' That book

Digitized by Google

has given me an idea, Mr. Farleigh," panted Eric, as the vicar helped him to climb the steep flight of steps to the lower terrace.

"What is that?"

"I'm going to begin in the middle next time, if God will let me have another chance; no use to patch up a bad, broken life like mine from the outside. I've said the first word, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' and that is in the middle, isn't it, Mr. Farleigh?"

"Yes, that is the middle of a certainty—— But Eric, Eric, what is the matter now!" for the young man was swaying and gasping—moaning too, as though tortured with pain.

"I think it is pleurisy: I've had it once, you know. Ah, here it comes again!"

They had reached the upper terrace, and the light from the library window shone with a soft red glow across the grey stone of the steps leading up to it.

Hesitating not a moment, for though elderly, he was hale and strong, whilst the young man beside him was a mere framework of bones, the vicar lifted Eric in his arms, and carrying him up the broad, shallow steps to the window, pushed it open, and with his burden entered the room.

* * * * *

Digitized by Google

It was to be a Christmas of surprises after all for Hubert and Molly, beginning with that hurried pealing at the library bell, which everyone jumped up to answer, thinking the house was on fire at the very least.

Then, when they flung open the door, Mr. and Mrs. De Grey first, both of them rather white and strained in expression, the two children next, in round-eyed curiosity, with a group of frightened, whispering servants in the background, all that they saw was some one lying prostrate on the couch near the fire, wrapped in a greyish, whitish-looking rug, whilst the vicar—who had failed to put in an appearance for dinner—knelt at his side, looking anxious and sympathetic.

"Why, it is my Mr. Ghost!" cried Molly, with a jubilant shout, recognizing the rug as the one she had bestowed on the shivering spook.

A shrill cry from the background greeted this announcement, and Ellen Samuel, regardless of consequences, fell into violent hysterics, and had to be carried off the scene by one of the footmen.

"It is Uncle Eric!" exclaimed Hubert, in an amazement scarcely less than his sister's. But Mrs. De Grey, in the thankfulness of her heart, whispered brokenly—

Digitized by Google

"It is the prodigal, come to his home at the last!"

Even Mr. De Grey forgot to be hard, cold, and self-restrained that night, and welcomed back his erring young brother, not like the elder son in the parable, but like the father himself, who sent for the best robe, and ordered the feasting, that the whole household might rejoice at the return of the wanderer.

When the constable, tired of the waiting for the message that never came, put in an appearance at the Grange, it was to find Dr. Bentley's gig from Charlesford there before him, and the house in a bustle and flutter owing to the unexpected return and alarming illness of Mr. Eric De Grey.

This was surprising enough, but the constable was to be more astonished yet, for, calling him into his little business room near to the hall door, Mr. De Grey counted out a pile of twenty golden sovereigns, and pushed it towards him.

"What is it for, sir?" asked the constable, putting one hand up to rub his eyes, under the impression that he was asleep and dreaming.

Mr. De Grey's voice was thick and rather husky; he spoke so rapidly, too, that the man could gather only a general idea of what he said.

"It is the reward I offered for the discovery of

Digitized by Google

the poacher who wounded Biles; I give it to you with the understanding that you let the matter drop at once, and for ever; let all the bills be removed from the hoardings before daybreak to-morrow."

The constable bowed himself out of the room and the house, with all possible speed, being more than half afraid lest Mr. De Grey should change his mind; and being disposed to be prompt in all his actions, the man carried the money home to his wife, then taking a broom and a bucket of water, set out to obey the injunction to destroy the offending posters.

* * * * *

The ghost was never seen in the old quarry again, and gradually the terror of the visitation died out in the village of Framstock; whilst Molly, grown a big girl now, has dropped and forgotten the funny illusions of her childhood.

The picture-book called "The Spider's Two Wisdoms," lies always under a glass case in the library at Rock Grange; it was instrumental once in turning a sinner from the error of his ways, and directing him heavenwards.

Eric De Grey only lingered until the time of roses came again, and then he died, a humble believer in the Crucified.

Digitized by Google

There is no prodigal in the family of the De Greys now: only another tablet on the wall of the north aisle of Framstock church, and on it a text, which Molly De Grey reads sometimes, with swimming eyes—

"A little child shall lead them."

THE END.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

PUBLICATIONS

OF THE

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

BY

G. MANVILLE FENN.

Cloth boards, 5s. each.

FRANK AND SAXON: A Tale of the Days of Good Queen Bess.

CROWN AND SCEPTRE: A West Country Story.

GIL THE GUNNER; or, The Youngest Officer in the East.

JACK AT SEA; or, All Work and no Play made him a Dull Boy.

MASS' GEORGE; or, A Boy's Adventures in the Old Savannahs.

NED LEGER: The Adventures of a Middy on the Spanish Main.

PLANTER JACK; or, The Cinnamon Garden.

SAIL HO! or, A Boy at Sea.

THE SILVER SALVORS: A Tale of Treasure Found and Lost.

THE VAST ABYSS. Being the Story of Tom Blount, his Uncles and his Cousin Sam.

TO THE WEST.

UNCLE BART. The Tale of a Tyrant.

Digitized by Google

THE HOME LIBRARY.

Crown 8vo, cloth boards, 3s. 6d. each.

BLACK AND WHITE. By the late H. A. FORDE.

CHARLEMAGNE. By the Rev. E. L. CUTTS, D.D. With Map.

CHURCH IN ROMAN GAUL (THE). By the Rev. R. TRAVERS SMITH, B.D. With Map.

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT. The Union of the Church and State. By the Rev. E. L. CUTTS, D.D.

JOHN HUS. The commencement of Resistance to Papal Authority on the part of the Inferior Clergy. By the Rev. A. H. WRATISLAW, M.A.

JUDÆA AND HER RULERS, from Nebuchadnezzar to Vespasian. By M. BRAMSTON. With Map.

MAZARIN. By the late GUSTAVE MASSON.

MILITARY RELIGIOUS ORDERS OF THE MIDDLE AGES: the Hospitallers, the Templars, the Teutonic Knights, and others. By the Rev. F. C. WOODHOUSE, M.A.

MITSLAV; or, the Conversion of Pomerania. By the late Right Rev. R. MILMAN, D.D. With Map.

NARCISSUS: a Tale of Early Christian Times. By the Right Rev. W. BOYD CARPENTER, Bishop of Ripon.

RICHELIEU. By the late GUSTAVE MASSON.

SKETCHES OF THE WOMEN OF CHRISTENDOM. Dedicated to the Women of India. By the late Mrs. RUNDLE CHARLES.

THE CHURCHMAN'S LIFE OF WESLEY. By R. DENNY URLIN, Esq., F.S.S.

THE INNER LIFE, as Revealed in the Correspondence of Celebrated Christians. Edited by the late Rev. T. ERSKINE.

THE NORTH-AFRICAN CHURCH. By the late Rev. JULIUS LLOYD, M.A. With Map.

THE LIFE OF THE SOUL IN THE WORLD: its Nature, Needs, Dangers, Sorrows, Aids, and Joys. By the Rev. F. C. WOODHOUSE, M.A.

THOUGHTS AND CHARACTERS: being Selections from the Writings of the late Mrs. RUNDLE CHARLES.

Digitized by Google

MANUALS OF HEALTH.

A Set of Manuals for Household Use.

Fcap. 8vo, limp cloth, 1s. each.

NOTES ON THE VENTILATION AND WARMING OF HOUSES, CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, AND OTHER BUILDINGS.
By the late ERNEST H. JACOB, M.A., M.D. (Oxon.)

ON PERSONAL CARE OF HEALTH.
By the late E. A. PARKES, M.D., F.R.S.

AIR, WATER, AND DISINFECTANTS.
By C. H. AIKMAN, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S.E.

HEALTH AND OCCUPATION.
By the late Sir B. W. RICHARDSON, F.R.S., M.D.

THE HABITATION IN RELATION TO HEALTH.
By F. S. FRANÇOIS DE CHAUMONT, M.D., F.R.S.

NATURAL HISTORY RAMBLES.

Intended to cover the Natural History of the British Isles in a manner suited to the requirements of visitors to the regions named

Fcap. 8vo, with numerous Woodcuts, cloth boards, 2s. 6d. each.

IN SEARCH OF MINERALS. By the late D. T. ANSTED, M.A.

LAKES AND RIVERS. By C. O. GROOM NAPIER, F.G.S.

LANE AND FIELD. By the late Rev. J. G. WOOD, M.A.

MOUNTAIN AND MOOR. By J. E. TAYLOR, Esq., F.L.S.

PONDS AND DITCHES. By M. C. COOKE, M.A., LL.D.

SEA-SHORE (THE). By Professor P. MARTIN DUNCAN.

UNDERGROUND. By J. E. TAYLOR, Esq., F.L.S.

WOODLANDS (THE). By M. C. COOKE, M.A., LL.D.

Digitized by Google

SPECIFIC SUBJECTS.

Fcap. 8vo, limp cloth, 4d. each.

ALGEBRA. By W. H. H. HUDSON, M.A.
(Answers to the Examples given in the above, limp cloth, *6d.*)

EUCLID. Books 1 and 2. Edited by W. H. H. HUDSON, M.A.

ELEMENTARY MECHANICS. By W. GARNETT, M.A.

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY. By the Rev. T. G. BONNEY, M.A.

NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS.

A Series of Manuals which furnish in a brief and popular form an accurate account of the Great Non-Christian Religious Systems of the World.

Fcap. 8vo, cloth boards, 2s. 6d. each.

BUDDHISM: being a Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Gautama, the Buddha. By T. W. RHYS DAVIDS, M.A., Ph.D. (18th Thousand.) With Map.

BUDDHISM IN CHINA. By the late Rev. S. BEAL. With Map.

CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM: a Comparison and a Contrast. By the Rev. T. STERLING BERRY, D.D.

CONFUCIANISM AND TAOUISM. By ROBERT K. DOUGLAS, of the British Museum. With Map.

HINDUISM. By the late Sir M. MONIER WILLIAMS, M.A., D.C.L. With Map.

ISLAM AND ITS FOUNDER. By J. W. H. STOBART. With Map.

ISLAM AS A MISSIONARY RELIGION. By CHARLES R. HAINES. (*2s.*)

STUDIES OF NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS. By ELIOT HOWARD. (*2s. 6d.*)

THE CORÂN: its Composition and Teaching, and the Testimony it bears to the Holy Scriptures. By SIR WILLIAM MUIR, K.C.S.I., LL.D., D.C.L., Ph.D.

THE RELIGION OF THE CRESCENT; or, Islam, its Strength, its Weakness, its Origin, its Influence. By the Rev. W. ST. CLAIR-TISDALL, M.A., C.M.S. (*4s.*)

Digitized by Google

THE ROMANCE OF SCIENCE.

This Series shows that Science has for the masses as great interest as, and more edification than, the romances of the day

Post 8vo, with numerous illustrations, cloth boards.

COAL, AND WHAT WE GET FROM IT. By Professor R. MELDOLA, F.R.S., F.I.C. *2s. 6d.*

COLOUR MEASUREMENT AND MIXTURE. By Sir W. DE W. ABNEY, K.C.B., R.E., F.R.S. *2s. 6d.*

DISEASES OF PLANTS. By Professor MARSHALL WARD. *2s. 6d.*

OUR SECRET FRIENDS AND FOES. By PERCY FARADAY FRANKLAND, Ph.D., F.R.S. Fourth edition, revised and enlarged. *3s.*

SOAP-BUBBLES, AND THE FORCES WHICH MOULD THEM. By C. V. BOYS, A.R.S.M., F.R.S. *2s. 6d.*

SPINNING-TOPS. By Professor J. PERRY, M.E., F.R.S. *2s. 6d.*

TIME AND TIDE: a Romance of the Moon. By Sir ROBERT S. BALL. Fourth edition, revised. *2s. 6d.*

THE MACHINERY OF THE UNIVERSE. Mechanical Conceptions of Physical Phenomena. By Professor A. E. DOLBEAR, A.B., A.M., M.E., Ph.D. *2s.*

THE MAKING OF FLOWERS. By the Rev. Professor G. HENSLOW, M.A., F.L.S., F.G.S. *2s. 6d.*

THE STORY OF A TINDER-BOX. By the late C. MEYMOTT TIDY, M.B., M.S. *2s.*

THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF WORLDS. A Lecture by the late Professor A. H. GREEN, M.A., F.R.S. *1s.*

THE SPLASH OF A DROP. By Professor A. M. WORTHINGTON, M.A., F.R.S. *1s. 6d.*

Digitized by Google

MRS. EWING'S WORKS.

SNAPDRAGONS: a Tale of Christmas Eve; and OLD FATHER CHRISTMAS. Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE. Small 4to, paper boards, 1*s.*

THE PEACE EGG, AND A CHRISTMAS MUMMING PLAY. Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE. Small 4to, paper boards, 1*s.*

MARY'S MEADOW, AND LETTERS FROM A LITTLE GARDEN. Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE. Small 4to, paper boards, 1*s.*

LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE; or, The Luck of Lingborough. Illustrated by the late R. CALDECOTT. Small 4to, paper boards, 1*s.*

STORY OF A SHORT LIFE (THE). Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE. Small 4to, paper boards, 1*s.*

DADDY DARWIN'S DOVECOTE: a Country Tale. Illustrated by the late R. CALDECOTT. Small 4to, paper boards, 1*s.*

DANDELION CLOCKS, AND OTHER TALES. Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE, and other artists. Small 4to, paper boards, 1*s.*

JACKANAPES. With Seventeen Illustrations by the late RANDOLPH CALDECOTT. Small 4to, paper boards, 1*s.*

BROTHERS OF PITY; and other Tales of Beasts and Men. Crown 8vo, with numerous Illustrations, cloth boards, 2*s.* 6*d.*

OLD-FASHIONED FAIRY TALES. Fcap. 4to, with numerous Woodcuts, ornamental paper boards, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Library Edition of "Jackanapes," "Daddy Darwin's Dovecote," and "Lob Lie-by-the-Fire." In one volume. Small 4to, cloth boards, 5*s.*

JULIANA HORATIA EWING AND HER BOOKS. By HORATIA K. F. GATTY. With a Portrait by GEORGE REID, R.S.A. Illustrated by facsimiles from Mrs. EWING'S Sketches, and a cover designed by the late RANDOLPH CALDECOTT. Small 4to, paper boards, 1*s.*

Digitized by Google

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS.

ALONE AMONG THE ZULUS. s. d.

By a Plain Woman. The Narrative of a Journey through the Zulu Country. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo.....*Cloth boards* 1 6

ALURED D'ERESBY'S INHERITANCE.

By ANNETTE LYSTER. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo.....*Cloth boards* 2 6

ANIMAL CREATION (THE).

A Popular Introduction to Zoology. By the late THOMAS RYMER JONES. With nearly 500 Engravings. Post 8vo.....*Cloth boards* 7 6

ANOTHER MAN'S BURDEN.

A Tale of Love and Duty. By AUSTIN CLARE. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo.....*Cloth boards* 3 6

ART TEACHING OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH (THE).

With an Index of Subjects, Historical and Emblematic. By the late Rev. R. ST. JOHN TYRWHITT, author of 'Lectures on Symbolism." Post 8vo.....*Cloth boards* 5 0

AUSTRALIA'S HEROES.

Being a slight Sketch of the most prominent amongst the band of gallant Men who devoted their lives and energies to the cause of Science and the development of the Fifth Continent. By C. H. EDEN, Esq. With Map. Crown 8vo. .....*Cloth boards* 3 6

BAD LITTLE GIRL AND HER GOOD LITTLE BROTHER (A).

By Mrs. EDITH E. CUTHELL. With several Illustrations. Crown 8vo. .....*Cloth boards* 2 0

BEHIND THE CLOUDS.

A Story of Village Life. By GRACE HAMILTON. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 1 6

Digitized by Google

BEARING THE YOKE. *s.* *d.*

By HELEN SHIPTON. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 2 0

BELFRY OF ST. JUDE (THE).

By ESMÉ STUART, author of "Mimi." With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo..... *Cloth boards* 2 0

BELL IN THE FOREST (THE).

By BEATRICE RADFORD. With One page Woodcut. Crown 8vo..... *Cloth boards* 1 0

BERNARD HAMILTON, Curate of Stowe.

By MARY E. SHIPLEY, author of "Beside the Guns." With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 3 0

BIBLE PLACES.

Or, The Topography of the Holy Land. By the Rev. Canon TRISTRAM, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S. New edition, brought up to date. With Map. Crown 8vo *Half bound* 5 0

BLAKES OF CULVEREDGE (THE).

By C. E. M., author of "St. Anne's Court." With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 2 6

BRITISH BIRDS AND THEIR HAUNTS.

Being a Popular Account of the Birds which have been observed in the British Isles, their Haunts and Habits. By the late Rev. C. A. JOHNS, B.A., F.L.S. Post 8vo. *Cloth boards* 5 0

BRITISH BIRDS, SKETCH BOOK OF.

By R. BOWDLER SHARPE, LL.D., F.L.S. With numerous Coloured Illustrations by A. F. and C. LYDON. Crown 4to..... *Cloth boards* 14 0

BY LANTERN LIGHT.

A Tale of the Cornish Coast. By AUSTIN CLARE. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 3 6

BY THE GAIL WATER.

By ELLA NAPIER LEFROY ("E. N. LEIGH FRY"). With One page Woodcut. Crown 8vo..... *Cloth boards* 1 0

Digitized by Google

CAN SHE FORGIVE? *s.* *d.*

By E. S. CURRY. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 1 6

CHEMISTRY OF CREATION (THE).

Being a Sketch of the chief Chemical and Physical Phenomena of Earth, Air, and Ocean. By ROBERT ELLIS, M.R.C.S. A new edition, revised by Professor BERNAYS, F.C.S., etc. With numerous Illustrations. Fcap. 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 4 0

CHRISTIANS UNDER THE CRESCENT IN ASIA.

By the Rev. E. L. CUTTS, D.D. With numerous Illustrations. Post 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 5 0

CHRYSSIE'S HERO.

By ANNETTE LYSTER, author of "Fan's Silken String." With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 2 6

DAWN OF CIVILIZATION, THE (Egypt and Chaldæa).

Third edition, revised and enlarged. By Professor MASPERO. Edited by the Rev. Professor SAYCE. Translated by M. L. MCCLURE. With Map and over 470 Illustrations, including three coloured plates. Demy 4to. ..... *Cloth boards* 24 0

Half morocco, gilt edges 48 0

EMMA'S MARRIAGE.

By F. E. READE, author of "A Wife from the Country." With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 2 0

EVENINGS AT THE MICROSCOPE.

Or, Researches among the Minuter Organs and Forms of Animal Life. By P. H. GOSSE, Esq., F.R.S. A new edition, revised by Professor F. JEFFREY BELL. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 5 0

EVERYDAY HEROES.

Stories of Bravery during the Queen's Reign. With several Illustrations. New Edition. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 2 6

FAITH OF HIS FATHER (THE).

By HELEN SHIPTON. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 3 6

Digitized by Google

FIFTH CONTINENT, WITH THE ADJACENT ISLANDS (THE).

Being an account of Australia, Tasmania, and New Guinea. By CHARLES H. EDEN, Esq. With Map. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 5 0

FLOWERS OF THE FIELD.

By the late Rev. C. A. JOHNS, B.A., F.L.S. Twenty-ninth Edition. Entirely re-written and revised by G. S. BOULGER, F.L.S., F.G.S., Professor of Botany in the City of London College. With numerous Woodcuts. Small Post 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 7 6

FOREST TREES.

By the late Rev. C. A. JOHNS. Post 8vo. *Cloth boards* 5 0

FROZEN ASIA.

A Sketch of Modern Siberia. Together with an account of the Native Tribes inhabiting that Region. By C. H. EDEN, F.R.G.S. With Map. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 5 0

GREAT GOLD MINE (THE).

By C. E. M. With several Illustrations. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 2 0

HELEN'S PROBATION.

By A. E. D., author of "The Colston Grange Ghost." With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 1 6

HERBERT CLUTTERBUCK.

A Tale of Opening Manhood. By ARTHUR CANON. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 2 0

HERE AND ELSEWHERE.

The Fortunes of George Adams in Town and Country. By the Rev. HARRY JONES. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 2 0

HEROES OF THE ARCTIC AND THEIR ADVENTURES (THE).

By FREDERICK WHYMPER. Ninth edition, revised and brought up to date, with Illustrations and Map of the Arctic Regions. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 3 0

HISTORY OF INDIA

From the Earliest Times to the Present Day. By L. J. TROTTER. Revised edition, brought up to date. With a Map and Numerous Engravings. Post 8vo. *Cloth boards* 6 0

Digitized by Google

IN HIS SERVICE. *s.* *d.*

By S. L. G. H. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 2 0

JAN.

By MRS. NEWMAN, author of "Her Will and Her Way." With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 2 6

JANIE FLETCHER.

By F. E. READE. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 1 6

JASPER'S SWEETBRIAR.

Or, "To Have and to Hold." By CATHERINE E. MALLANDAINE. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 2 6

JEWISH NATION (A HISTORY OF THE).

From the Earliest Times to the Present Day. By the late E. H. PALMER, M.A. With Map of Palestine and numerous Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 4 0

LAND OF ISRAEL (THE).

A Journal of Travels in Palestine, undertaken with special reference to its Physical Character. By the Rev. Canon TRISTRAM. Fourth edition, revised. With Two Maps, Four Coloured Plates, Eight page Illustrations, and numerous other Engravings. Large Post 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 10 6

LITTLE LASS AND LAD (A).

By SARAH TYTLER. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 3 0

MAR AND LETTICE.

A Story of the Days of good King George. By HESTER WHITE. With One page Woodcut. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 1 0

MAY-DUKE BLOSSOMS.

By PHŒBE ALLEN. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 2 0

Digitized by Google

MIMI. *s.* *d.*

A Story of Peasant Life in Normandy. By ESMÉ STUART. With Three full-page Illustrations on toned paper. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 2 6

MISS BRIGHT'S GUARDIAN.

By ALICE F. JACKSON. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 3 0

MISS CHILCOTT'S LEGACY.

By H. LOUISA BEDFORD. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 2 0

NATURAL HISTORY OF THE BIBLE.

By the Rev. Canon TRISTRAM, author of "The Land of Israel," etc. With numerous Illustrations. Post 8vo. *Cloth boards* 5 0

NATURE AND HER SERVANTS;

Or, Sketches of the Animal Kingdom. By the Rev. THEODORE WOOD, F.E.S. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 4 0

NELLIE AND HER MODELS.

By the Ven. Archdeacon WYNNE. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 3 0

NUMBER ONE.

By CHRISTABEL R. COLERIDGE. With One page Woodcut. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 1 0

OCEAN (THE).

By P. H. GOSSE, F.R.S. With Fifty-one Illustrations. Post 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 3 0

ON MUSIC'S WINGS.

By MABEL E. WOTTON. With One page Woodcut. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 1 0

OTTERBURN CHASE.

By C. N. CARVALHO. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 2 6

Digitized by Google

OUR NATIVE SONGSTERS. *s. d.*

By ANNE PRATT. With Seventy-two Coloured Plates. 16mo. ..... *Cloth boards* 4 0

OVER THE SEA WALL.

By EVELYN EVERETT-GREEN. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 1 6

PASSING OF THE EMPIRES (THE). 850 B.C.–330 B.C.

By Professor MASPERO. Edited by the Rev. Professor SAYCE. Translated by M. L. MCCLURE. With Maps and numerous Illustrations, including Three Coloured Plates. Demy 4to ..... *Cloth boards* 25 0

Half morocco, gilt edges 50 0

PICTORIAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE BRITISH ISLES.

With about 150 Illustrations. Letterpress by the Rev. H. H. BISHOP. Royal 4to..... *Cloth boards* 4 0

PUNCH, JUDY, AND TOBY.

By M. BRAMSTON. With Three page Illustrations Crown 8vo..... *Cloth boards* 2 0

QUEEN OF THE EXTINCT VOLCANO (THE).

A Story of Adventure. By C. DUDLEY LAMPEN. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. *Cloth bds.* 2 0

QUEER CHUMS.

Being a Narrative of a Midshipman's Adventures and Escapes in Eighteen Hundred and —— War Time. By CHARLES H. EDEN. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo..... *Cloth boards* 2 6

RICK RALTON'S RECONCILIATION.

By the Rev. E. N. HOARE. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 3 0

ROUGH CAST.

By CHRISTABEL R. COLERIDGE. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 1 6

Digitized by Google

	s.	d.
ROYAL PARDON (THE). By M. B. Cox (NOEL WEST). With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards*	1	6
SAINTS AND HEROES OF OUR OWN DAY. By Mrs. T. R. SEDDON. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards*	1	0
SEATON COURT. By MAUD CAREW. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards*	2	6
SETTLER'S STORY (A). By F. B. FORESTER. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards*	3	0
SHAVEN CROWN. A Story of the Conversion of the Surrey Border. By M. BRAMSTON. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards*	2	0
SIEGE PERILOUS (THE). How I learnt to sit in it. Being the History of His Selfish Youth. By ROGER JAMIESON. Edited by AUSTIN CLARE. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards*	3	6
SILVER CORD (A). By the author of "The Squire of Bratton." With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards*	2	0
SLAVERS AND CRUISERS. A Tale of the West Coast. By the late S. W. SADLER, R.N. With Four page Woodcuts. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards*	3	0
SOME HEROES OF TRAVEL. Or, Chapters from the History of Geographical Discovery and Enterprise. Compiled and re-written by the late W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS. With Map. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards*	5	0
SQUATTER'S HOME (THE). By MARIANNE FILLEUL. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards*	2	0
STORIES FROM ITALIAN HISTORY. By B. MONTGOMERIE RANKING. With Two page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards*	1	6

Digitized by Google

STRUGGLE OF THE NATIONS (THE). *s.* *d.*

Egypt, Syria, and Assyria. By Professor MASPERO. Edited by the Rev. Professor SAYCE. Translated by M. L. McCLURE. With Map, three coloured Plates, and over 400 Illustrations. Demy 4to.....*Cloth boards* 25 0
Half morocco, gilt edges 50 0

STURDY AND STILTS.

Or, Firm Friends. By ANNETTE LYSTER. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. .....*Cloth boards* 3 0

TEMPTATION OF ERNEST ELLERBY (THE).

By F. LETHBRIDGE FARMER. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. .....*Cloth boards* 3 0

TEN TALENTS.

By HELEN SHIPTON. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. .....*Cloth boards* 2 6

THANKFUL HEART (A).

By LADY DUNBOYNE. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo.....*Cloth boards* 1 6

THROUGH THE ROUGH WIND.

A Story of the Collieries. By CRONA TEMPLE. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. .....*Cloth boards* 1 6

THROUGH THORNS AND BRIARS.

By H. S. STREATFEILD. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo.....*Cloth boards* 1 6

TORMENTILLA.

By LIESA FOREST. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. .....*Cloth boards* 2 6

TRIO IN THE SQUARE (THE).

By OLIVE MOLESWORTH. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. .....*Cloth boards* 1 6

TURBULENT TOWN (A).

Or, the Story of the Arteveldts. By the Rev. E. N. HOARE, M.A. With Four page Woodcuts. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 2 6

Digitized by Google

TWO OLD MAIDS. *s.* *d*

Or, Rosalind's Sisters. By ANNETTE LYSTER, author of "A Leal, Light Heart," etc. With Four page Woodcuts. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 3 0

UNDER THE BLUE FLAG.

A Story of the Monmouth Rebellion. By MARY E. PALGRAVE. With Three page Woodcuts. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 1 6

UNDER THE DOG STAR.

A Tale of the Borders. By AUSTIN CLARE. With Four page Illustrations. Crown 8vo..... *Cloth boards* 3 6

VICTORY THAT OVERCOMETH (THE).

A Story of the days of Constantine. By ANNIE L. GEE. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards* 1 6

"WHISPERING TONGUES."

By PHŒBE ALLEN. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo..... *Cloth boards* 1 6

WIFE FROM THE COUNTRY (A).

By F. E. READE. With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo..... *Cloth boards* 2 0

WITH WIND AND TIDE.

A Story of the East Coast. By the author of "The Dean's Little Daughter." With Three page Illustrations. Crown 8vo. ..... *Cloth boards* 1 6

WRECKED LIVES.

Or, Men who have Failed. First and Second Series. By the late W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS. Crown 8vo. *Cloth boards*, each series 3 6

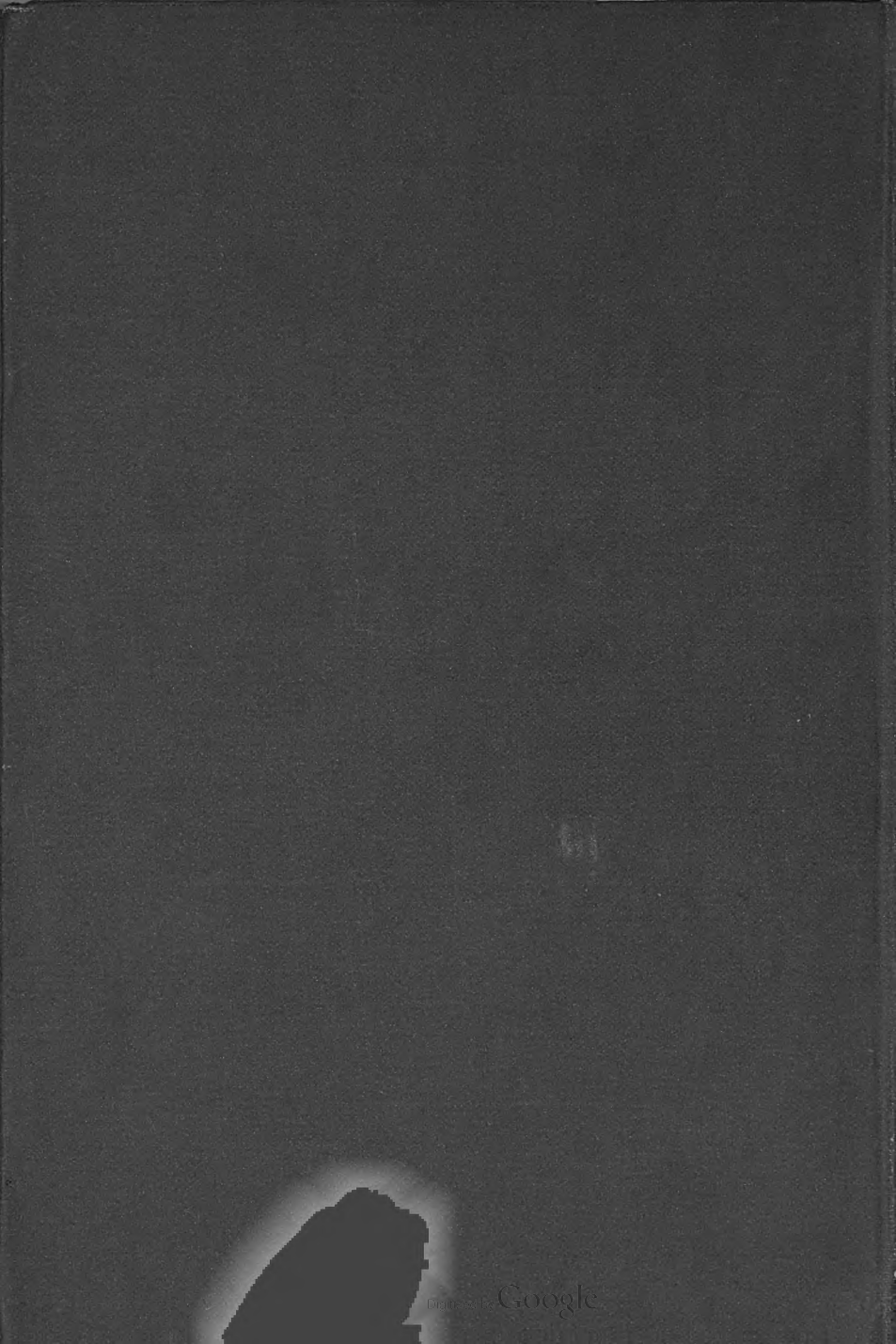
LONDON:
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, W.C.; 43, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, E.C.
BRIGHTON: 129, NORTH STREET.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google


Digitized by Google